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Pioneer Baptist Work In Oxford County

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by

Zella M Hobson

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PREFACE

It has been said that "The ropes of the past ring the bells of the future." I have tried to make a record of Baptist ropes in Oxford County that, as I see it, are ringing the church bells of today.

I have given my main attention to the Baptist Pioneers and to showing the gradual growth of church organizations in the County. I have aimed to make a record of when and by whom each church was organized. More detailed accounts of churches are left for local historians.

I acknowledge with gratitude the generous co-operation I have received from church clerks and others interested, in supplying me with the needed material and much more that space does not allow me to use. The principal sources of Baptist information have been the History of Freewill Baptists by Rev. I. D. Stewart, the Autobiography of David Marks (a striking example of the early evangelist), early Association records, the minutes of the first Regular Baptist church in Oxford, the valuable documents held by the First Baptist Church of Woodstock and the minutes of various churches.

ZELLA M. HOTSON

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CHAPTER I.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE COUNTY

The Treaty of Paris by which Canada was formally ceded to the British Crown was signed on the 10th of February, 1763. At this time there was no permanent settlement west of the Ottawa River, the first survey marking off land divisions for the purpose of settlement being at Kingston in 1783. This was followed by other lots along the St. Lawrence and around Niagara as homesites for the United Empire Loyalists who came in great numbers from the newly independent country called the United States.

In 1791 the Constitutional Act divided Quebec into Upper and Lower Canada, Col. John Graves Simcoe becoming the first Lieut.-Governor of the Province of Upper Canada in 1792. Upper Canada was divided into four districts which were now called the Eastern or Johnstown District, the Midland or Kingston District, the Home or Niagara District and the Western or Detroit District and these were again divided into counties in 1792, the nineteen Counties electing the sixteen representatives who formed the first parliament which convened at Niagara on September 17th, 1792.

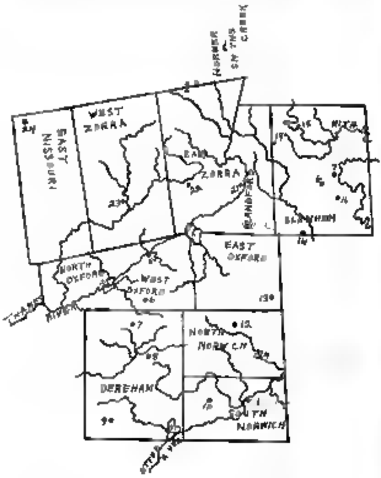
In this first territorial division of land, July 16th, 1792, Norfolk County was one of the Counties organized. Norwich and Dereham townships were townships in this County, the description of these townships being: "the township of Norwich lies to the east of, and adjoining to, Dereham" and "the township of Dereham lies to the west of, and adjoining to Norwich." The first surveying in these townships was done in 1799 and the first land granted in each of these townships was in 1800. Norwich was called after the city of Norwich, the metropolis of Norfolk in England, and Dereham was named after Dereham, an ancient English town in Norfolk, England.

Also by this land division York County in the District of Niagara extended west to the river Thames and included Blenheim and Blandford townships as part of its West Riding. Blenheim was described as "lying to the northward of Dundas Street opposite Burford" and Blandford as "a township the most westerly in the West Riding of York County and lies northward of Dundas Street opposite to Oxford and is washed by the river la Tranche (Thames)." Mr. Augustus Jones surveyed a portion of Blenheim and Blandford townships and also of Oxford township in 1793. The township of Blenheim is named after Blenheim, situated in the parish of Woodstock and liberty of Oxford, England, where was situated the beautiful house and park bestowed by national gratitude on the Duke of Marlborough for the victory at Blenheim, Bavaria. Blandford is named from the second title of the Duke of Marlborough, Marquis of Blandford, conferred in 1702 and borne by the heir apparent to the Dukedom. A portion of the south-west corner of the township of Blandford was set aside by Governor Simcoe for a town site and was for a long time known as the Town Plot. This is the north-western part of the present City of Woodstock (north of Dundas Street and west of Riddell Street). The settlement which gradually established here was called Oxford, until about 1836. It was established as the Town of Woodstock in 1851.

When Col. Simcoe became Lieut.-Governor in 1792 he wrote to Thos. Watson in the United States—who had rendered Col. Simcoe essential service while he was a prisoner of war in the United States—urging him to come to Canada and bring all his relations and friends with him and he would give them a whole township. Mr. Watson's son and his cousin Thomas Horner of New Jersey, U.S.A. came in the year 1793. Governor Simcoe had the first three concessions of the township of Blenheim surveyed for their accommodation. Mr. Horner and Mr. Watson waited while the survey was being completed and selected a site for a mill, then returned to New Jersey. Mr. Horner came back as far as Newark (Niagara) where he resided for awhile and then moved to Detroit where he remained until that town was given up by the British Government in June 1796 by the provisions of the Jay Treaty of 1794. Mr. Horner then proceeded to Albany, N.Y. where he purchased materials and engaged mechanics to erect a saw mill, bringing them by boat and roughly made sledges to their destination in Blenheim. The mill was in working order by the latter part of 1796 but had not been run at all before the dam broke away. From the scarcity of hands it was 1797 before it was rebuilt and the first plank was sawed. This saw-mill—on a site just west of Princeton—was the first in the County of Oxford. Mr. Horner also erected the first grist mill in the County. Governor Simcoe's successor would not acknowledge his claim to the township of Blenheim, allowing him only that land he was entitled to as a squatter which would be 200 acres.

Governor Simcoe had issued a proclamation which offered inducements to settlers from the United States offering a township to those who would provide 40 settlers whose families would become permanent residents. The minutes of the Upper Canada Council Chamber, Navy Hall, March 23rd, 1793 state that a petition signed Gideon Bostwick, Robert Williams, Seth Hamlin, Abel Kelsey and Thomas Ingersoll and seventeen associates, prayed for a township, Thomas Ingersoll appearing in behalf of himself and the above named petitioners. The petition was granted giving to Mr. Ingersoll and the associates a tract of land of about 64,000 acres. Mr. Ingersoll, for himself and others, was to select the land. With the assistance of his friend Brant, the Chief of the Six Nation Indians, assisted by a posse of experienced hunters, he explored the unoccupied lands west of the Grand River. He made choice of that section which now comprises the three Oxford townships, then returned to his native town, Great Barrington, Mass., U.S.A. and prepared to establish a settlement. Two years later with his family he returned to Canada, but as there was no road west of Ancaster he remained at Queenston. After spending two years on the frontier he pushed westward and after great hardships reached the spot he and his Indian friends had selected for his camp, a spot now on Thames Street, Ingersoll, and with his own hands felled a huge basswood that marked the site of the new home. Other members of the little band followed, enduring privations unknown to those who succeeded them.

After Governor Simcoe's removal the Government was not so sympathetic towards settlers from the United States and they withdrew the original allotment from Mr. Ingersoll and his little band, although efforts were made to induce the Government to keep faith. They were each given a squatter's lot, the dates of patent for these 40 lots running from 1795-


FORMER
SMITHS CREEK
WEST ZORRA
EAST NISSOURI
EAST ZORRA
BLANDFORD
BLENHEIM
NITH R.
EAST OXFORD
NORTH OXFORD
WEST OXFORD
THAMES RIVER
DEREHAM
NORTH NORWICH
SOUTH NORWICH
OTTER CREEK
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3
4
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1. Woodstock
2. Ingersoll
3. Tillsonburg
4. Norwich
5. Beachville
6. Foldens
7. Salford
8. Mt. Elgin
9. Brownsville
10. Springford
11. Otterville
12. Burgessville
13. East Oxford
14. Gobles
15. Richwood
16. Drumbo
17. Wolverton
18. Plattsville
19. Bright
20. Tavistock
21. Innerkip
22. South Zorra
23. Embro
24. East Nissouri

1800. "Those worthy men who introduced civilization into this section left many to perpetuate their names and emulate their virtues.

In 1798 Blenheim, Blandford and Oxford on the Thames, with the townships of Burford, Norwich and Dereham by Act were erected the County of Oxford which Act did not come into force until Jan. 1st 1800. Oxford County was in the Western District.

Oxford County took its name from Oxford City the Capital of Oxfordshire, an inland County of England having the River Thames for its eastern boundary. Oxford on the Thames (which was later divided, North Oxford withdrawing as a separate organization in 1828 and West Oxford in 1842, the name of the remainder becoming East Oxford) took its name from the same source.

The township of Zorra, later divided into East and West Zorra townships, was surveyed in 1820 and was probably given this Spanish word for a name by the Governor Sir Peregrine Maitland. It was added to the County by Act of Parliament in [illegible]

Nissouri was also surveyed in 1820 and its name is probably Indian, referring to the river though some think that it is a corruption of "High Zorra" referring to its location. It also was added to the County in 1821 and in 1851 was divided into East and West Nissouri townships. West Nissouri becoming a part of Middlesex County.

The County as constituted by Act in 1851 was composed of Blenheim, Blandford, East and West Zorra, Nissouri, North, West and East Oxford, Dereham and Norwich townships and contains nearly a half million acres of beautifully rolling land. It lies from eight hundred and fifty to ten hundred and fifty feet above sea-level.

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CHAPTER II.

EARLY OCCURRENCES

(As given by W. H. Landon in historical sketches belonging to Woodstock Baptist Church. Elder Landon was the first pupil in Oxford to take advanced studies, which he took under L. H. Perry. He was ordained as a Free Communion Elder in 1828 and spent his life serving the Oxford churches. In 1843 he was appointed the first County Superintendent of Education, which office he held for some years.)

With the dawn of settlement and civilization among the dense forests of timber, bark covered shanties made their appearance, built by the use of the axe alone. With not even the sound of another axe within hearing, nor a friend within many miles, these pioneers were men and women of determination and courage. These very early settlers were nearly all U. E. Loyalists. Old country emigrants had not yet reached this far inland. These first settlers came chiefly from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York and Vermont States and were plain country people, small farmers or the sons of small farmers.

In 1817 the population of the then County had increased to 832, two thirds or three quarters of whom would be in "Oxford on the Thames" township. There were at this time one grist mill and two saw mills but no school, no house of worship and no gaol.

In 1822 there were but four school houses, one each in West, North and East Oxford and one in Blenheim. In the Oxfords the schools were kept open pretty regularly during the winter of each year. In Blenheim not so regularly. West Oxford was fortunate in having a competent school master named McArthur settle among them, who worked his farm in summer and taught school in the winter and taught it well. On this account there was an atmosphere of intelligence in West Oxford in advance of the other townships. Later L. N. Perry a man of good education, who had taken a course of medical studies, came from New England and settled in this place and for many years taught the winter school.

"The schools few as they were and distant from each other were the only source of literary knowledge to the public. There was no periodical literature—there were no books. There were but three weeklies in the Province and I think not half a dozen copies came to this county. There was no book-store west of Dundas. With two or three exceptions the private libraries were very small."

* * *

CHAPTER III.

RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

METHODISM

In 1794 the first quarterly meeting of the Methodist denomination in the Niagara district was held. From here the work spread. Nathan Bangs of Connecticut, U.S.A. who, it is said, was converted at M.E. meetings in the Niagara district, became an itinerating Methodist preacher in September 1801 and as early as 1802 travelled westward into Burford and Oxford townships and introduced Methodism among the early settlers.

The people would be gathered together to hear him by some interested settler who would ride over the trails in the forest and notify the scattered pioneers that there would be preaching in his cabin. Mr. Bangs is reported to have stated at these meetings "I am a Methodist preacher and my manner of worship is to stand while singing, kneel while praying and to stand while preaching, the people who are meanwhile sitting."

These missionary tours resulted in a Methodist Class being held in Blenheim and in Oxford townships.

On August 4th and 5th in 1804 Nathan Bangs attended a quarterly meeting in Oxford, which was either organized before or at this time. According to Rev. George I. Van Loon this was the first definite organization of which records are still kept.

We are indebted to Rev. G. I. Van Loon (of the United Church) for the following information also, "The war of 1812 gave the work a set back. Most of the missionaries were Americans and the whole movement was looked upon as being pro-American. The result was that for a while Methodist congregations were prohibited from holding property and Methodist ministers were not allowed to conduct the marriage ceremony. Later a chapel was erected by the Methodists in West Oxford township, the deed for the property being dated November 20th, 1833. This deed was registered on February 19th 1834.

In 1839 the work was organized as a circuit under the Rev John Bailey. The following churches comprised the circuit—Oxford Chapel, Beachville, Ingersoll, 12th Concession Zorra, Woodstock, North Oxford, Embro Road, Aylmer, Mt. Elgin, Dereham and Salford.

In 1842 the circuit became known as the Woodstock circuit and in 1849 this circuit was divided half becoming the Woodstock circuit and the rest the Ingersoll circuit. In 1864 the old church at West Oxford was torn down and the present building was erected and dedicated."

BAPTIST

In July 1808 Peter Teeple, Simon Mabee, Zachariah Burtch, Deborah Mabee, Abigail Burtch and Elizabeth Scott of Oxford township, members of different Baptist churches, met at the home of Brother Peter Teeple and heard a sermon by Elder Fairchild of Townsend. These brothers and sisters decided to come under the watch-care of each other.

In September of the same year they formed into a branch of the Baptist church at Townsend and in October 1809 they were organized as a Baptist church.

FRIENDS

During the year 1809 Peter Lossing came from Dutchess County N.Y. and, liking the land opened up in Oxford County he returned the fall of the same year with his brother-in-law Peter DeLong and purchased 15,000 acres of Norwich township at fifty cents an acre. They then returned to Dutchess county and sold land to those who would settle in Norwich township and so a settlement was started.

In 1811 the Lossings settled in a comfortable log house and Peter Lossing, being a minister among Friends, established religious services in his house, this being the beginning of Friends' meetings in Oxford.

Later the membership was such as to warrant the establishment in 1816 of a Preparative meeting and in 1819 the Norwich Monthly Meeting was established comprising all the meetings of Friends in the Province from here westward. This monthly meeting has been held continuously since that time.

The original meeting house was built either in 1820 or 1821 on Quaker Street ,Norwich.

PRESBYTERIANS

Rev Dr W T McMullen in an historical sketch stated that "In 1829 the Rev George Romanes, an ordained minister from the Presbytery of Glasgow Scotland, visited Canada and preached in Zorra July 31st and reported on his return home that he had found a log church built in which regular sabbath services were held though they had no minister." A replica in stone of this log church near Embro was unveiled in 1932 in commemorate the commencement of Presbyterian church organization in the County in 1832.

Rev G. Murray a Presbyterian minister moved into Blenheim near Princeton about 1831. He gave a site on the south west corner of his farm for a church building and contributed liberally to its erection. This congregation would probably be commenced soon after the one in Zorra township.

Roman Catholic

The 100th anniversary of the founding of the Roman Catholic faith in Oxford County was celebrated in Ingersoll on October 9th 1932.

The founding of this faith in 1832 was the result of visits of missionaries to this district.

The first mass to be said in Oxford County was celebrated in James O'Neil's blacksmith shop in the village of Beachville in the spring of 1835. Beachville at that time was larger and of more importance than Ingersoll. Mass was occasionally celebrated here until later when a small church was built.

About 1840 a piece of land was given in Ingersoll by Mr. Carnegie (a non-Catholic) upon which to build the first Catholic church in Ingersoll.

Anglican

Rear-Admiral Henry Vansittart, deciding to take up land in Canada, in the latter part of the year 1832 sent Capt. Andrew Drew R.N. as his agent to make preliminary arrangements.

Capt. Drew purchased considerable land in the east of what is now Woodstock and wishing to bring the town of the future down his way built a brick church on one of his lots. Funds for the building were contributed largely by Admiral Vansittart and his sister Mrs. East and friends in England.

Admiral Vansittart and his family accompanied by Rev. Wm. Bettridge, arrived from England on the 21st of June 1834. Mr. Bettridge became the first Rector of this little Anglican Church, which he took over into in the fall of 1834. In 1836 it received the Crown endowment, this being the last endowment granted by the Crown to any church in this Country. The Church was consecrated by the Bishop of Quebec and named St. Paul's Church in 1838.

The original building is still in use and is considered to be the oldest church building in the County in which Divine Worship is still carried on.

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Chapter IV

Early Baptist Families

As it is our purpose to trace the development of the Baptist cause in this county let us see who were the early Baptist families in this section, many of whom are mentioned in the Pioneer Sketches of Long Point Settlement by E. A. Owen.

Peter Fairchild and his family came from New Jersey to Norfolk County and settled near Townsend (now Boston) before the surveyor had arrived in that section. It was several years before they had a neighbor. When the Corliss and Beal families (also Baptists) arrived from New Jersey the three families covenanted with each other as a preliminary step towards the organization of a Baptist Church. This was on October 31st, 1804. Meetings were held alternately at their homes. During the visit of missionaries from the United States, the church was formally organized on November 9th, 1804 with thirteen members. On the 21st of October 1808 Peter Fairchild was ordained and installed as pastor of this church, a position he held for fourteen consecutive years.

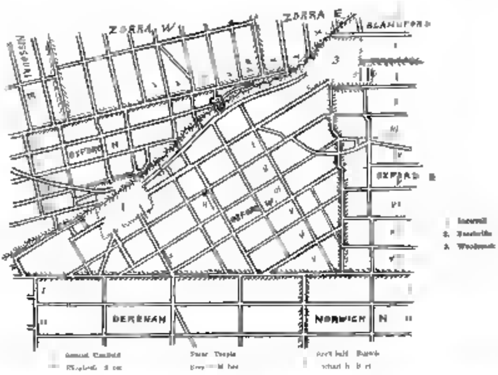
Frederick Mabee was a U.E. Loyalist who had lived in Massachusetts and fled into New Brunswick where he settled at St. John. In the fall of 1792 Mr. and Mrs. Mabee and family left St. John for Ontario, travelling on horseback and driving twelve cows. They had Indian guides through the forest trails and after wintering in Quebec reached Turkey Point, Norfolk County some time the next year. Frederick Mabee dying soon after moving to Norfolk County his widow received a U.E. Loyalist grant of six hundred acres of land.

Peter Teeple was a Lieutenant in the British Army during the War of Independence. He was six feet two inches in height with a fine physique. At the close of the war his company was disbanded at Halifax. He married Lydia Mabee, daughter of Frederick Mabee, and came to Norfolk County with her parents in 1793. After the township was surveyed he settled near Forestville. On January 1st, 1800 he was made a Justice of the Peace and a Commissioner to administer oaths. These 'Squires' were important persons in those early times. At the first session of the first court held in Norfolk Square Peter Teeple was one of the sitting Justices.

Titus Finch was also a soldier in the British Army who fought in the War of American Independence and following the war was relieved from service at Halifax. He moved into a back settlement in Nova Scotia and while there became ordained as a Baptist minister. Moving to Norfolk County in 1799 he settled on land near Vittoria, Charlotteville township, being given six hundred acres by the Government. He did much missionary work amongst his pioneer neighbors and in 1804 a church was organized. He served this church for over a quarter of a century and made missionary tours to other settlements. On one occasion a small sum of money was raised to send him on a missionary tour up into Oxford. For some years the only salary he received was a black suit of clothes annually. He had five sons and three daughters, several of whom settled in Oxford County. He later became pastor of a church in Oxford.

The Mabees and Peter Teeple became members of the first church at Charlotteville at Vittoria and when a chapel was built in 1807 Peter Teeple became one of the trustees. Soon after this Squire Teeple moved into Oxford and settled on land granted by the Government, being Lot 15 along the river Thames in Oxford township. He became a prominent man in the community. He had three sons and one daughter Sarah, who later married Archibald Burtch.

The second son of Frederick Mabee, Simon Mabee, was born in 1778. In 1799 he married Abigail Gustin and for a time owned the land upon which a portion of the old village of Vittoria is built. He later moved to Oxford County and settled on Lot 12 Concession 2, West Oxford. They


ZORRA W
ZORRA E
BLANDFORD
NISSOURI E
OXFORD N
OXFORD W
OXFORD E
DEREHAM
NORWICH N
1. Ingersoll
2. Beachville
3. Woodstock

had four sons and eight daughters. The descendants of Frederick Mabee are very numerous in Norfolk and Oxford counties.

Zachariah Burtch and family came from New York State about 1798. They settled in Brantford for a short time before moving westward. After remaining for a few days in the Horner Settlement in Blenheim, they made their way into Oxford township and Zachariah Burtch settled on Lot 18 Concession 1 of East Oxford, where he built the first log house in what is now the City of Woodstock. His son Archibald Burtch settled on Lot 19 beside him. This is just south of Dundas Street in the present city of Woodstock, at the east end of the city, the site being marked by an engraved gate post at the present entrance to Lot 18—now the Salvation Army home for boys.

Samuel and Lucy Canfield and their two sons Abraham and Samuel Jr were members of the party of forty settlers who were granted the township of Oxford on the Thames by Governor Simcoe in 1793. Samuel Canfield Sr settled on Lot 18 Concession 1 of West Oxford, his son Samuel Jr taking Lot [illegible] Concession 1. Abraham was the first settler in what is now East Oxford. Samuel Canfield Sr died in 1806 and was buried on his own farm. Abraham Canfield later gave the land for the present cemetery at Oxford Centre.

Elizabeth Scott, who also got her deed with the first registration (Dec. 31st. 1798) settled on Lot 18 Con. 4.

* * *

CHAPTER V

THE FIRST BAPTIST ORGANIZATION

"Oxford July 1808. A number of Baptists, members of different churches, met at the home of Bro. Peter Teeple and had a sermon by Elder Fairchild and chose Elder Fairchild Moderator and Bro. James Gorlis from Townsend clerk, which took a seat with us. Brothers and sisters present, Peter Teeple, Simon Mabee, Zachariah Burtch, Deborah Sales, Abigail Burtch and Elizabeth Scott, which wanted to come under the watch-care of each other. Then appeared Abigail Mabee and related her experience and desired to go forward in Baptism, likewise John A. Mabee came Elder watch care. Voted to hold Covenant on the second Saturday in every month."

So read the minutes of the earliest Baptist organization in Oxford County recording not only the loyalty of church members, though far from their home church, and their desire for Christian fellowship and counsel, but also recording the first baptism in the county, that of the wife of Simon Mabee.

On September 24th, the same year, a number of Brethren and Sisters of the Baptist Denomination belonging to different churches, some members of no church but having been baptized, met together with Elder Fair-

field and Elder Kendrick to confer on coming together in church relation or upon some other measure most for their mutual benefits and for the good of the cause of Christ in the World. It was decided that their numbers were too small to compose a well organized church but after some deliberation they chose rather to be formed into a Branch of the Baptist church of Christ in Townsend (Boston) their number now being nine, Samuel and Levy Canfield joining with the previous seven. This petition was therefore sent to Townsend signed by these nine people.

By the following fall the branch church had apparently prospered and strengthened enough to make a separate organization possible and a Council convened on October 8th 1809 with Elder Titus Finch as Moderator and Samuel Burdick, Clerk, the other members of the Council being Elder Peter Fairchild, John Sleight, Joseph Merrill, Samuel Canfield, Peter Teeple, Zachariah Burtch and Simon Mabee.

"All consented freely to the Articles of the Baptist order and all consented freely to adopt the Articles of the Charlotteville and Townsend churches and all consented to the Practice and Covenant." The Council withdrew and considered upon the matter and mostly agreed to Constitute the church. Peter Teeple received the Right hand of Fellowship on behalf of the church. Brothers James and Elisha Harris came forward and offered themselves to this church and were received. Bro. Zachariah Burtch was chosen Deacon of the church and Bro. James Harris, Clerk.

It may be of interest to note the Articles subscribed to by this first Regular Baptist Church in Oxford County.

The Article of the Covenant

We do now in the presence of the Omnipotent God of Elect Angels and men vouch the Lord Jehovah to be our only Lord and Sovereign and give up ourselves to His Service without reservation, taking His Holy Word for the Rule of our Conduct and by the Assistance of Divine Grace promising to observe all Commands and Institutions enjoined on us therein as far as we shall understand them, that we will as far as Divine Providence permits constantly attend the Publick Worship of God and Ordinances of the Gospel in this Church and extend a Faithful watch over all its members. Also in each private relation use our influence to promote Piety and family religion by reading the Scriptures, prayer and Christian Conversation, submitting to the Laws of Christ in the discipline of His House we promise to abstain from and guard against Covetousness, Defraud, Idleness, foolish Jesting, reviling and Evil Speaking with whatsoever is unbecoming the Christian Profession, Discarding un-Godliness, Worldly lusts, that we will live soberly seeking the advancement of the Kingdom of God in the general Good, humbly trusting in the Righteousness of our Glorious Redeemer for the Holy Spirit to Sanctify and enable us to persevere in Holiness until the Coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to whom be honor and power Everlasting. Amen.

The 11 Articles of *Faith*—(as Scriptures, Creation, Fall of Man, Plan of Redemption, etc.) include the following—10 We believe that all those who are Chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son and regenerated by the Spirit will finally persevere in faith and holiness unto the end and will be kept by the power of God through faith unto Salvation.

The 11 *Articles of Practice were as follows*

1. Duty to live a life of holiness and unite together as members the vis-

the laws of Christ in the world.

2. Church of professed believers.
3. Baptism an ordinance for professed believers to be performed by immersion and none ought to be received into the visible church till they have been thus baptized.
4. Lord's Supper only for those who have been thus baptized and received into the church.
5. None to administer ordinances except those who have been publickly set apart to preach the Gospel by prayer and laying on of the hands of the presbytery
6. Each individual Church has power and authority from Christ to govern itself.
7. The church to approve those members who have public gifts of prayer exortation or doctrinal.
8. First day of week is the Lord's Day or Christian Sabbath and duty of all to assemble themselves together on that Day to Worship God by reading, preaching and hearing His word together with solemn prayer and thanksgiving and singing of psalms, hymns and Spiritual Songs.
9. Duty of Gospel ministers to give themselves up wholly to the work of the ministry and duty of all church members to communicate of their substance and the church ought to be judge of the ability of each member and deal with them in case of their neglect of this as in other cases of Breach of Covenant.
10. Duty to keep the poor who belong to their community and not to cast them on the mercies of the publick, yet not so as to refuse assistance from the publick funds in case of extreme indigency
11. Duty to live in peaceable subordination to Civil Government and Magistrates and to obey every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake and that they have a right to avail themselves of the Benefits of the Civil Laws for their protection and to obtain redress of grievances but that no church member ought in any ordinary case to sue a Brother in the church at the Law but that all controversies respecting temporal interest ought to be settled by a reference to some of the Brethren of the church or judicious neighbors.
12. No person living in adultery or in practice of any known breach of the laws of God or man ought to be received or indulged in the church. The End.

Ten men and nine women signed the Articles of the Church.

The first exclusion from this church was two years later for falsehood. During the next ten years there are several records of exclusion—for intoxication, for fighting with one of his neighbors on the Lord's day, for accusing another with guilt and refusing to give any proof and he likewise having joined the free masons, for lying, for adultery, for refusing to travel with the church, for railing against the church and ministry, and for joining fully with the world in plays and their marrying. On Aug. 14th 1813 Nancy Brink was excluded for leaving the travel* of the church and breach of Covenant and joining the Methodist Class. Several of these excluded persons were reinstated.

*This word is used in nearly all early minute books and appears to refer to the church's itinerary/ [illegible].

The minutes also refer to differences among its members which were brought before the church and there settled by vote of the questions. Once the difference was over a handkerchief of [illegible] a piece of cloth, once over a bargain concerning some rope and once a family difficulty was brought before the church. The Brother acknowledged he had boxed his wife's ears after receiving several blows from her with a handspike. The church demanded a publick acknowledgement from both. The Brother refusing was excluded from fellowship and the sister was given one month in which to answer the requirement.

The members of the church arrest our attention as we read, "Voted that the members living within ten miles of the church's appointments are not to miss more than three Covenant meetings without being inquired after." Also "Voted that in Covenant each member is not to wait the example for the [illegible] but all to speak as the spirit moves them."

In July 1812 Simon Mabee was given free toleration from the church of Christ in Oxford to improve his gifts wherever the Lord in His providence may call him." And on October 4th 1817 a Council consisting of Elder John Upfold from Clinton (Beamsville) Church, Deacon Samuel Smith from Charlotteville Church and Bro. John Slaght from Townsend Church, convened with the Oxford Church for the purpose of ordaining Simon Mabee to the work of the Gospel

"After solemn prayer to Almighty God for His blessing and direction in this important business before us we proceeded to business

1st. Bro. Mabee related the work of God's grace on his soul, also his call into the ministry

2ly Asked the candidate a number of questions on Gospel doctrines and proceeded.

3ly Called on the Church to know if they were unanimous in calling Brother Mabee to ordination. Deacon Zachariah Burtch answered for the whole in the affirmative.

4ly Retired and after mature deliberation on the business before us, we unanimously agreed that it was proper to ordain Bro. Mabee but as the Council is small we recommend it to the church to postpone the ordination until more help can be obtained."

A few days later Charles Lahatt, a missionary from the Northern Baptist Missionary Society in the State of New York and also from the foreign and domestic missionary society in the City of New York, arriving in the community in his missionary capacity and being informed of the decision of the recent ordination Council ordained Bro Mabee in the presence of the church and a numerous congregation.

After his ordination Mr Mabee was pastor of this Oxford church for some years. "He did not enjoy the advantages of education but he closely studied the Bible and was a plain, faithful and affectionate preacher." (Wm. Rose) "He was well known as a strong and aggressive minister." (Fitch) In the latter period of his life he travelled extensively in Western Ontario, preaching and baptizing. Nearly one thousand people were baptized by him and many churches were established and enlarged. He died at his home in Oxford January 2nd 1848. His children all became members of the Baptist Church.

In 1819 the church was divided into three divisions East the Governor's Road to Deacon Tree, the River Settlement to Deacon Tims and the South Settlement of Oxford to Deacon Kings. Apparently services were held in these different sections, either at homes of members or in school houses. Services are mentioned at the school house near Bro. Tree on the Governor's Road, at the school house near Bro. Harris at the school house near Brother Jeremiah Finch and at the school house near Bro. Cross.

Darius Cross came from Bennington, N.Y. State, and the minutes give us the following information. April 26th 1820 Voted to send a letter to the Brethren at Bennington State of New York, respecting a letter for Bro. Cross. In July following "Voted that Bro. Darius Cross shall have liberty to improve his gifts in public where God in His providence may call him." On the 26th of July 1821 a letter was sent to Bennington informing them that "We have retracted the step we took in receiving Mr Darius Cross as a member of this church. We assure you brethren that we have not done this in consequence of any dissatisfaction in his conduct, for we believe him to be a real penitent and his conduct has been such as to gain the esteem of both church and society but we have done it under the consideration that the step was illegal and had a tendency to disturb the peace of Zion. The church, however almost immediately voted to retrace the steps taken about Bro. Cross and to receive him back if Bennington church would again give him a letter. Apparently he had not come from a Regular Baptist Church.

Besides Darius Cross, Bro. Nicholas French and Bro. Jacob Harris were given, in 1820 the liberty to improve their gifts in public.

In the early twenties this Baptist work was influenced and disrupted by Baptist missionaries from the United States. In order to understand this influence on the Baptist cause in Oxford, of which few records remain let us go back to the early days in New England and trace the story as we get it from Rev I. D. Stewart (who wrote a History of Freewill Baptists) and other Baptist historians.

* * *

Chapter VI.

Freewill and Free Communion Baptists.

The early settlers of New England in settling themselves in America regarded it as their right and duty to protect themselves and children from all error and this led to a belief in the necessity of uniformity of public worship, though this prevented religious freedom. It also led to the connection of church and state. This connection resulted in legal suppression of all who differed from the legal church—which was congregational, in compulsory support of churches and ministers, this being collected the same as other taxes and in worldly and not always converted ministers, who were led into the ministry because of the salary and the great influence a minister had in the community.

Some Baptist churches were started with difficulty. These Baptist churches, called Calvinists as well as the Congregational churches, all believed in predestination and that God ordains whatsoever comes to pass.

There was no salvation for all. The will of man was not free to choose the way of life as nothing could be done until God moved.

In protest to these conditions and doctrines the Free will Baptists came into being as a denomination. They had no desire to form a separate Baptist denomination and for many years their records show simply the name "Baptist Church." Their first ministers had all been members of the Baptist denomination and they still claimed to be Baptists but the Calvinistic Baptists refused to fellowship them. The name of Freewill was objected to for many years, "being given them by predestination brethren because they taught that the free grace of God gives power to every sinner to change his will, and conform it to the Gospel." (Marks) They believed not only in free will, but also in free salvation and free communion.

Other groups of Baptists were formed also during these times, as the Free Baptists, the Free Communion Baptists and the Open Communion Baptists. These were all somewhat similar to the Freewill Baptists, being protests against prevailing doctrines.

The first Freewill church was organized in 1780 at New Durham, New Hampshire with Benjamin Randall as Pastor. By the close of the year there were five free churches. The polity of these Baptists was gradually developed as their increasing numbers and changing circumstances required. After three and one half years, the early churches united in a Quarterly meeting and received the counsel, co-operation and support of each other. After eight and one half years more, owing to the increasing number of churches, Quarterly meetings were established in different localities and to these the local churches reported. A Yearly Meeting which held an annual session in four different places, received reports from these Quarterly Meetings. Some years later a General Conference was established, composed of delegates from the (now) seven Yearly Meetings. The first General Conference convened in October 1827.

Nearly all the ministers toured as evangelists, living on donations received as they went along. As they travelled through the sparsely settled Eastern States, small groups would be converted and be organized as a church. Sometimes a group would be found holding similar beliefs to the Freewills and it would be invited to join with them.

In this way missionary Elders from Vermont State came over into Lower Canada and organized churches at Hatley and at Stanstead in 1801. Rev. Asa McGray who came from Maine State, started the Barrington church in Nova Scotia in 1816 or 17. Missionaries from Maine also started work in New Brunswick, a church being organized at Hodgdon in 1822.

In Upper Canada a man named Andrew Banghart of Westminster Tp. in Middlesex County becoming converted began to exhort his neighbors until 40 or 50 had joined with him. Some of these had heard of Christians in New York State with similar beliefs to theirs and Banghart was sent to get in touch with them. He was unsuccessful but he went a second time and found Freewill Baptists, who baptized him and ordained him before he returned. Soon afterwards, Rev. Hosmer Jenkins, a Freewill minister came over to this district to visit these Baptists. He found a church of twenty members in Westminster and another one in Dunwich Tp. Elgin Co.

Several years before this Thomas Hutchins with two or three families of Free will Baptists removed from New Hampshire and Lower Canada into this section of Dunwich. For some years they enjoyed religious privi-began with other denominations but not finding with these the liberty which they wished to enjoy about eight persons for several months had held separate conference meetings and were called Freewill Baptists.

These two churches joined with a New York State Quarterly Meeting in 1821. Thomas Huckins commenced preaching and afterwards moving to London, a church was organized there and also joined the Quarterly Meeting in 1827. Thomas Huckins was ordained at London in June 1828, the first Freewill Baptist ordination in Upper Canada.

ELDER DAVID MARKS

Freewill Baptists called their Minister Elders (Page 8, Treatise on the Faith of Freewill Baptists, 1848 edition) and they performed the duties of pastors, teachers and evangelists. However I. D. Stewart [illegible] (page 32 [illegible]) [illegible] and Rev (page 45 Rev. David Marks—[illegible]) [illegible] were given licensed to preach by a local church and if desirable, were ordained later by a council. Sometimes Ruling Elders as well as Deacons were appointed in local churches. Often these were ordained to the ministry [illegible] (Stewart History pages 35 and 60). This appears to be an early custom.

Free Communion Baptists also called their ministers Elders.

A great evangelist for those times was born on Nov 4th 1805 at Shandaken, Ulster Co. New York State and named David Marks. The family moved to Junius, N.Y. where he spent his boyhood. His parents were both members of a Calvinistic Baptist Church. Often his mother took him to her room and told him that she had consecrated him to God and was assured that he would be converted early and would plead with him to give his heart at once to the Saviour. He says in his diary "At the age of four years a sense of death and judgment filled me with awful feelings. At the age of nine I was generally careless of eternal things yet frequently I would resolve never more to engage in idle sports." When nearly eleven years old his life was much endangered by a fall from a horse which so affected him that he made oath unto God that he would, like Daniel, kneel and pray thrice in a day the rest of his life, even though he might not be 'elected' for salvation.

Eighteen months after this he first spoke in a Conference meeting of the Calvinistic Baptist church, where his parents were members. A few weeks later he asked to be baptized and though accepted for baptism he was not baptized, even though he renewed his request twice afterwards. Six months later he again requested baptism and the subject was this time discussed and his views concerning election and communion were asked for. He told them he was in doubt whether their views were agreeable to the scriptures and they voted not to receive him. He was then aged 13 and all this was a trial to his Christian faith. But his oath to God was diligently kept and his faith and trust were strengthened. He attended meetings of different denominations, particularly the Methodists. Then in July 1819 some Freewill Baptists having heard about him came thirty miles to see him and he, finding that their views were the same as his, was baptized and joined their church.

When 15 years old he felt God was calling him to preach the Gospel and warn the wicked of their danger and in April 1821, aged 15, he definitely left home to labor in the Lord's vineyard and walking from place to place he spoke wherever he stopped, often at Methodist gatherings or Free Communion conferences, as well as on the street and at Freewill gatherings.

His parents being poor he had only received a meagre education but twice he refused offers of financial help towards an education as he believed his life would be short and it would take time from his duty of declaring the glad tidings of salvation. However he studied with considerable success as he travelled around. Often large crowds came out to hear 'the boy' preach and from preaching in the open air he developed great strength of voice. His diary says he often spoke six hours in a day and seldom became weary in the effort.

He was usually given free board and lodging wherever he stopped and maybe received 50 cents or a dollar from some interested listener. He was often tired and hungry and cold but his needs were always met and he gained in influence as a preacher and later as a leader in the denomination. As the continual walking from town to town took up so much time he was sometimes loaned a horse and was later assisted in procuring a horse and waggon. The waggon often served as a pulpit for his open air addresses and the horse in a little over two years carried him 19 thousand miles.

David Marks in his travels crossed the Niagara into Canada for the first time in the fall of 1826, spending a few days in the Niagara district. In Oct. 1827 he made his first trip to London district to visit the three Freewill Baptist churches. He crossed at Lewiston and came by way of Hamilton, Ancaster, Brantford, Oxford and London. He was accompanied by Freeborn W. Straight of Ontario, New York State. After six weeks Mr. Marks returned to the United States but made several return journeys all over the same route. In Sept. 1829 he married Marilla Turner, the eldest daughter of Captain Daniel Turner who had moved to Zorra, Oxford County from Vermont State. Mrs. Marks was well educated and accompanied her husband on his journeys.

Mr. Straight remained in Elgin County for some months, going over to New York State to be ordained and again returning to Elgin County. He married a girl from Dunwich Tp., Elgin.

Elder Jenkins who had been the first Freewill minister to visit the London District, also made several return visits.

These ministers addressed gatherings in Oxford County whenever in the neighborhood. Dr. Perry whose house is the oldest still standing in Woodstock and is occupied by descendants of Dr. Perry had a room called the minister's bedroom which was a sacred place. Many missionaries and ministers of all denominations stayed here, welcome guests while in the community. The family have in their possession reminiscences of some of these men. Elder Jenkins always carried a stocking in which he placed donations received as he travelled around. The stocking was never hidden as he felt there was no necessity for that. Elder Marks was called a very very dignified and sober man who would have been shocked at a funny story. Dr. Perry named a son and a daughter after David Marks and his wife Marilla.

However I think Mr. Marks had a sense of humor. On one of his tours through Upper Canada he arrived at Ancaster a little before sunset and "wishing to warn the wicked of this village and having but a few minutes to stop, I gave notice for preaching in seven minutes on the green opposite the meeting house. When the time had expired two persons were present and I asked them to give me a text. They gave me "Nothing". Soon after prayer 70 or 80 people assembled and taking my text I proceeded to show first that God created the world out of nothing; secondly that man was placed under a law in which there was nothing unjust; thirdly that there is nothing to justify the impenitent transgressor; fourthly that there will be nothing to comfort him in death—nothing to save him in judgment or to give him hope in hell. Fifthly that the righteous have by nature nothing meritorious, nothing of their own of which they can boast, nothing to fear in death, and that on the judgment day they will have nothing to cause them grief, and in heaven nothing to disturb their peace and finally that in time and in eternity nothing will turn to the advantage of the wicked or to the disadvantage of the righteous. On returning to Ancaster about three weeks later he preached to about 150 people on "Something."

ELDER THOMAS TALLMAN

In the fall of 1831 Elder Thomas Tallman of New York State came into Oxford and settled his son on land in Zorra. It became known that he was a minister and he was pressed to preach. He was gifted with great natural eloquence and had an earnest and fervid manner when speaking and was affable and genial to meet. Upon once commencing to preach it was impossible for him to withdraw. Whole settlements came out to hear and half his hearers would follow him to the next settlement to hear him again. Elder Tallman was pastor of the First Free Communion Baptist church of Worcester, Sharon and Cobleskill, State of New York.

Elder David Marks, who as an evangelist often spoke to Free Communion gatherings, makes the following record in his journal: "In the early part of January 1827 I held meetings with several churches of the Free Communion Baptists. This denomination is distinct from the Freewill Baptists. The principal difference is that many of the Free Communion Baptists believe in what is called 'the final perseverance of the saints.' It is thought, however, that more than one half of the denomination exactly agree with the *Freewill* Baptists. Another difference is they have a small number of Articles' abstract from the scriptures. Their churches are situated mostly in New York and principally within one hundred miles west of Albany. Their exact number I cannot state but probably they had in 1827 about forty churches and three thousand members. Not far from this time their annual conference was divided into two called the Northern and Southern conferences. The great western turnpike is the dividing line between them. I am of the opinion that if the *Free Communion* Baptists and the Freewill Baptists should become acquainted with each other they might become one people."

At the time that Elder Tallman came into Oxford there were only three church organizations in the County. The Methodists had their organization in West Oxford township, the *Friends* had their settlement and regular services around Norwich and the *Regular* Baptists had their organization in Oxford township. It is stated that Elder Tallman would have been willing to work with Elder Mabee of the Regular Baptist Church and so strengthen the cause that then existed, but Elder Mabee, not agreeing with all of Elder Tallman's religious views, thought it his duty to denounce him and to warn the people against him.

Elder Tallman returned to his home in New York State before winter and returned in the spring duly authorized to constitute and organize churches "wherever God in His Providence might lead him." The *First Free Communion Baptist church* in the Town of Oxford (now the City of Woodstock) was organized on April 22nd 1832 at the log school house at the corner of what is now Dundas and Chapel Streets. Nineteen of the twenty-one charter members had been members of the Regular Baptist

church and yet others transferred later. It is interesting to notice some of these.

Eli Harris and his family of eight sons and three daughters moved into Oxford township where Eli Harris died in 1819. His sons James and Elisha and afterwards others of his family joined the Regular Baptist church in Oxford township, where James became clerk and was made a lay preacher. Two months after the Free Communion church was organized we find that James Harris preached for them and was then received into their fellowship and granted a license to improve his gifts, June [illegible]. On the 21st of the following October we find that "a council was held at the house of David Curtis (who had also transferred from the Regular Baptist church) for the purpose of ordaining Darius Cross and James Harris. Six sons of Eli Harris became ministers though not all of them in the Baptist Denomination.

Darius Cross left the Regular Baptist church of Oxford township to become a charter member of the Free Communion church and after his ordination in the fall he with Elijah Harris, Elder Jacob Goble and Elder Tallman, were the early Free Communion preachers and organizers in the County.

Zachariah Burtch apparently always remained a member of the Oxford township Regular Baptist church. His youngest daughter Esther married Dr. L. H. Perry and they were prominent workers in the Free Communion church for many years. It was their home which was such a welcome stopping place for all touring evangelists.

Archibald Burtch, son of Zachariah Burtch, married Squire Teeple's daughter who died in 1831 leaving him with five small children. His second wife was Miss Jane Blow. Jane Blow with her family had come from Philadelphia in Oct. 1820 travelling by team and covered waggon. They arrived in Oxford with just seven dollars left but traded one horse for three cows. They lived the first winter in a little building 12 feet square on the Burtch farm. Jane Blow worked for Mrs. Burtch and received in pay two lbs. of maple sugar for each day's work. Afterwards she worked for Leddingtons and took her pay in home-made flannel and linen cloth. She was baptized by Elder Cross and joined the church in Blenheim, a branch of the Woodstock church. Archibald Burtch was baptized in 1834 and joined the Woodstock church. He was a few months later appointed a deacon of this church. Few people were more [illegible] in the early Woodstock church than Deacon Burtch and his wife. He donated the land on which the college was built and when it was in difficulties, he mortgaged his farm to assist in building it. Church meetings were often held at their house or large gatherings in their barn.

We get this description of early church meetings of the Free Communion Baptists from W. H. Landon. This Free Communion church set aside one day in every month to acknowledge their covenant. For a period of 40 years these monthly week-day meetings were held more or less regularly and failure to confess orally to the covenant and Articles of faith at these meetings resulted in exclusion from the church. A member might be absent on the sabbath without exciting remarks but if one absented himself from the Saturday covenant meeting he must have a good excuse or he would fall under censure. The covenant meeting was conducted as follows. The minister if present, or otherwise the senior deacon, conducted the devotional exercises, after which the church clerk read the Articles of

Faith and all who acknowledged the Articles were required to manifest it by rising. The Articles of Covenant were then read and all were required to speak to their Covenant. Not much secular business was transacted at these sacred meetings. The manner of conducting public worship differed much from the present practice. The introductory services consisted of a hymn, a prayer and a second hymn by the minister. Elder Tallman, I think, read the scriptures but Elder Harris and Elder Crose seldom or never. Then followed the sermon, after which the brethren and sisters had liberty to improve their gifts as it was called; and this was regarded not only as a right but as an imperative duty, and it was not unusual for every church member present to rise and address the audience under a conscientious sense of duty. The privilege and duty were considered so sacred by the people, that he would have been a bold man who would venture to propose even a modification of it. The people had to be taught cautiously that the Spirit had not conferred the same gifts upon all men and all women and it took years for the church to comprehend this truth. These customs and usages to which I have alluded were by no means peculiar to this church, but were common to all other churches in the country and in the neighboring states at least in rural districts, including the Methodist as well as the several sections of the Baptist Denomination."

This church in the Town of Oxford was called the Oxford Church.

EXPANSION

Not only were meetings held in the Oxford Church but, in order to preach the Gospel to all whom they could reach, visits were made into different sections of the County, wherever it was possible to get a few persons together and Branch churches were started.

The first of these was in Blenheim Township at the house of Joseph Smith near Horner's Creek eight being baptised and a church of thirteen members being organized on October 13th [illegible]. Jacob Goble was elected Deacon and Bro. Slaughson, Clerk.

During the year 18[illegible] Elders Tallman, Crose and Harris made frequent visits to the south Norwich settlement and in February 1824 the brethren there asked to be set apart as a Branch. At the June Conference of the Free Communion Baptist Association of Upper Canada, which was held at [illegible] Burtch's in East Oxford the following June, they presented a petition asking to be set apart as a church. This petition was granted and the hand of fellowship given by Moderator Elder Goble. Some of the early members here were Simon Heath, Oren Wright, Martin Hicks Jr., Asapel Ostrom and Christopher C. Otis, all in South Norwich in the vicinity of Springford.

A branch of the Oxford Church was organized across the river in Zorra in June 1830, Alphaeus Taft being elected Deacon and [illegible] Cross, clerk. Meetings were held here at the Taft school house. E. Cody and wife, M. Cody and E. McQuain were baptized in this district.

Another branch of the Oxford Church was formed in the Rowell settlement in Zorra on Dec 3rd 1830. The early members here include Stratton Rowell and his wife, who had been baptized in 18[illegible] and Joseph and Keziah Brown, Nelson and Anna Brown and Charles Flowers, all of whom had been baptized in 1829. Stratton Rowell built a neat frame chapel on his property on the 10th Line of East Zorra, chiefly at his own expense, and services were held here every two weeks or once a month according to circumstances. Covenant meetings were held monthly. On Sundays following the Covenant meetings, the Lord's supper was observed and Mr and Mrs. Rowell entertained all who had come long distances through the woods.

At first the membership of these Branch churches in Zorra were included in the Oxford church. Thus in the early thirties about thirty-five members were dismissed to the 1st, and 2nd. Zorra churches.

The Brethren at Harris Street made a request to the Oxford church, on the 10th of December 1831 to be set off as a separate cause to be called "The Second Branch of Oxford Church.

A church organized in Southwold township, Elgin County joined with the others in forming an Association, to which they sent delegates. At other points—in Westminster and Lobo townships in Middlesex County and Dunwich and Malahide townships in Elgin County—those converted became members of the Oxford Church and these little colonies were visited once every few months. Only in the most favored localities was there preaching as often as every other Sabbath. It was very difficult, owing to this scattered state, to maintain these infant institutions. Landon.

As we have stated an Association of these Free Communion churches was formed immediately following the organizing of the separate churches. At the Association in 1835 four churches reported as follows. Blenheim 37 members, Southwold 18, Oxford 79 and Norwich 15 a total of 149

In 1835 W. H. Landon was ordained an Elder and in June 1836 Brother Wolverton was ordained after the Annual Conference, and these afterwards gave much of their time and talent to preaching. These early ministers received no definite salary each having his own occupation as well as preaching.

Efforts Towards Union of Free Will and Free Communion Churches.

When Elder Marks made his first journey through Oxford in 1827 he consented to preach and went to the house of Elder James Harris where he addressed a meeting in the evening and the next day held two meetings. On the Sabbath he preached three sermons in Blenheim.

In 1829 an effort was made to effect a union of the Free Communion and the Free Will Baptist Churches in Upper Canada. There were at this time in Western Ontario three Freewill and four Free Communion churches, far removed from others of kindred faith. Elders Marks and Straight attended the Eighth Annual Free Communion Baptist Conference of Upper Canada which was held at the house of Deacon Burtch being appointed to labour to effect a union. It was agreed to refer the proposed union to the churches who should send delegates with instructions to a conference, which should meet at Oxford two weeks later. The conference met according to appointment and was composed of Marks, Straight, Eachuse and five laymen on the one side and Harris, Smith, Goble, and seven laymen on the other. After a full discussion it was decided, First, that we find only one difference in theory between the two denominations, namely whereas the Freewill Baptist maintain that a saint, in this state of probation, may lose that grace and that character which constitute him such, and thus finally perish the Free Communion Baptists generally maintain the reverse. Secondly we find but one difference in practice, namely that the Free Communion Baptists have a few written Articles of faith adstruct from the scriptures, while the Freewill Baptists acknowledge no standard but the Bible. Thirdly agreed that we do not think these differences to be of sufficient importance to warrant propriety in our maintaining separate visibility. Fourthly agreed, that we hold a friendly correspondence with each other baptise break bread and ordain with each other as occasion may require. Also that we accept each other in church labors etc with the same freedom, as though we were but one denomination. These Resolves were presented to the Free Will Yearly Meeting in New York State and approved Elder James Harris of the Free Communion church at Woodstock being present.

These advances seem to have been initiated by Elder Marks and the Freewill Baptists. However at the Free Communion Baptist General Conference at Ames, Montgomery County, New York State, on September 8th, 1841, composed of 58 churches, 32 churches reported in favor of union with the Free Will churches 13 were opposed and 11 made no report. Three delegates were appointed to the Free Will General Conference, who were instructed to present a request for the admission of their churches to membership with that body. This was presented to the General Conference on October 8th 1841 and it was granted unanimously. Their churches were mostly in the vicinity of Utica, their membership being about 2500.

* * *

CHAPTER VII.

REGULAR BAPTIST EXPANSION

Now let us return to the Regular Baptist Church organization in Oxford township. What a catastrophe it must have seemed to lose nineteen members all at one time with more following as the months went by. We read of members being excluded "for embracing as we conceive erroneous principles" and of others laboured with to no purpose and finally excluded for joining the Free Communion church. One member gave as her reason for leaving the church that the church held to close communion and unconditional election.

But the church continued to take in members. These members were in widely scattered districts, coming from all of the townships of South Oxford and from Zorra and Missouri townships in North Oxford.

The church called a Council in January 1833 to ordain Nicholas French. The Council examined him on January 25th and ordained him on January 26th. The seventeen members of the Council who came from outside points include the following Elders—Charlotteville—Elder Finch; Bayham Elder Jos. Merrill; Westminster Elder Slate (Slaght?); Southwold, Elder Reuben Crandall. Elder Crandal was chosen Moderator.

Three times in 1836 delegates from this church were appointed to attend ordination Councils—June at Southwold to ordain Wm. McDermand, July at Aldborough to ordain Dugal Campbell and in Sept. at Townsend to ordain John Harris.

Groups in the various settlements now commenced to consider separate organizations.

David Churchill and family had moved into South Zorra and joined with the Oxford Church. Mary and Benjamin Vandecar from the same community were baptized in 1826. Meetings were held in this section at the house of Deacon Fitch and on the 4th of March 1826 a Council met and after deliberation agreed to set off the Brethren in Zorra as a church in sister relation. Elder Mabee gave the right hand of Fellowship and Elder French gave the charge to the church. The church chose David Churchill as Deacon and Joseph Fitch as Clerk and consisted of eleven men and six women. This church carried on for some time and then lapsed, being reorganized again and joining the Grand River Assn. in 1848 with a membership of 28. Mitchell Vandecar was Clerk from 1851 to 1861 when the church ceased reporting and apparently discontinued. Pastors who served here besides Elder Simon Mabee and Elder Nicholas French were Elder Titus Finch (1831) and Elder Isaac Elliott (1849).

Jared and Salmon Vining sons of Rev. Ebenezer Vining whose labours were mostly in Massachusetts and New York States, came to Canada in 1822 and settled in Nissouri. An autobiography of Rev. T. B. Brown an old local Methodist preacher and pioneer of East Nissouri gives us the following information: "A few years after the Vinings settled in Nissouri, two missionaries, Elders Mabee and French were sent to labour in Nissouri by the Churches belonging to the Baptist church in Oxford who, having no money, paid them with coats, socks and other home made clothing. The labours of these missionaries were not in vain, for the Word was blessed and many were awakened and converted and among them the Vinings. A Baptist Church was formed in the Vining neighborhood and these brothers were leading spirits in it. The elder brother Jared became the Deacon and Salmon became the minister." The records of our First Baptist Church show that on June 17th 1827 Jared Vining told the travail of his mind and was baptized and later in the summer Salmon, Charlotte and Mariah Vining were also baptized. A Council from the Charlotteville, Townsend and Zorra Churches met with the 1st Oxford Church on the 4th Friday in May 1828 for the purpose of organizing a church in Nissouri. We have no record here of the ordination of Salmon Vining which according to their family records took place in a new barn on his own farm. "Dissensions among leading brethren led to the downfall of this first organization" which was reorganized in 1838 as the West Nissouri Baptist Church, which is now in the Middlesex Association.

At a meeting in Norwich township on May 17th 1821, Jonathan Emeigh and Hiram Sprague told their experiences, were baptized and received the right hand of Fellowship into the First Oxford Church. Sarah Sprague later became a member also.

In December 1823 the Norwich township brethren voted against forming a separate organization and requested that they might remain in the old church organization. Jonathan Emeigh was appointed a Deacon.

On March 25th 1837 a Council including Elders John Harris from 1st. Townsend, Simon Mabee from 1st Oxford and J. Woodward from 1st Norwich, organized the Second Church in Norwich with nineteen charter members. In January 1848 it was decided to erect a meeting house and apparently three families, members of the church, gave land on which to build a Chapel as three rows of lots in the adjoining cemetery were re-served for the exclusive use of the families of Emeigh, Dennis and Snyder. The first building erected bears the date 1849 and is now used as a shed on the old Snyder farm. The present building was built in 1870 and dedicated in January 1871, Dr. Fyfe of Woodstock being the special speaker. The first pastor of the church was Elder Isaac Elliott who came from Ingersoll on horseback once a month and served the church for a year for 50 bushels of wheat. About 1857 the name of the church was changed to *Burgessville* Baptist Church.

In 1858 Rev. Wm. Haviland the pastor of Burgessville held evangelistic meetings in the town hall at *Otterville*. Following the special meetings a church was organized with Rev. Wm. Haviland as pastor, Stephen Delong and Silas Slaght as Deacons and Edmund Tites as Clerk. This church was received into the association in 1858. In the year 1866 a site was procured and a church building erected. At that time the cause at Otterville was maintained in connection with the Springford Church and remained with it until 1874 when the church was reorganized, eighteen members from Springford uniting with the newly organized church at Otterville. About the year 1886 services were suspended for a time owing to being unable to support a pastor alone. In 1896 the Mt. Elgin church then working with Springford, united with Salford, and Otterville and Springford united as a field. The church prospered and the church building was veneered with red brick, a basement was put in and it was otherwise improved.

During the Convention Controversy of 1928 the membership of this church divided. That section which joined the Union of Regular Baptists, augmented by a number from the Springford church, gained possession of the Church Building.

The 'Sprague Settlement' being named after the first settler Hiram Sprague was on the east side of East Oxford township. Hiram Sprague built a large house about the centre of his large farm and they were noted for their hospitality being ever the friends of new settlers arriving in the district. Mr. Sprague used to walk through the bush to attend church services of the West Oxford Church. When the Second Norwich (Burgessville) church was organized he became a member there. As the district became more settled church services were often held at a school house near his farm. Later he gave an acre of ground on the north west corner of his property Con. 6, East Oxford, for a chapel, other settlers furnishing timber and other materials and all helping with the work. On July 11th 1850 a Council convened and formed a Branch of the Burgessville church here with Hiram H. Sprague as Deacon. This remained a Branch church until May 2nd 1862 when it became recognized as an independent church to be known as the *East Oxford* Baptist Church. It was received into the Association this year. There were 40 charter members. Elder H. Haviland, who was the pastor of the Burgessville church, became the first pastor of the East Oxford church. The church continued to co-operate with Burgessville until May 3rd 1887 when it united with Cradleville church. This union was terminated after six years, the church re-uniting with Burgessville with which church they still co-operate.

A pastor of the Burgessville and East Oxford churches, Rev. H. Woodward, was instrumental in organizing a church in the village of *Norwich* and resigned his pastorate to become the first pastor of the Norwich church. Norwich church was organized with sixteen members, living in the town and vicinity on June 14th 1854. The two bodies of

Methodists in Norwich having united leaving one church vacant, the Baptist people bought the building and have continued to worship in it. A recognition Council of the Association was held in the church on November 9th 1884.

During the pastorate of Rev W. L. Newton (1884-1891) Norwich dismissed sixteen members to form a Baptist church at Hatchley. They afterwards built a small church there and for a considerable number of years carried on, the Norwich pastor preaching there each Sunday afternoon. They ceased to function some years since.

On the 22nd of November 1838 the First Oxford church called a Council from Westminster, Charlotteville, Southwold, Zorra, Nissouri, and Townsend and organized a new church called the *Second Church in Oxford.* This apparently was the Harris Street church a few miles south of Ingersoll. A Chapel was built here and church services carried on for some years. There was a cemetery on the property. The bodies of Eli Harris and others who had been buried on his farm were removed to this cemetery.

The Harris family and others had divided on religious beliefs, some remaining with the First Oxford township church and some joining the First Free Communion Baptist Church of Oxford at Woodstock. We have noted that on the 10th of December 1831 "the Brethren at Harris Street made a request to the Oxford Church (Woodstock) to be set off as a separate cause to be called 'The Second Branch of Oxford Church.'" This organization evidently met in the Harris Street Chapel also, as it is reported by descendants of those pioneers that one organization would padlock the door of the Chapel against the use of the other organization when feeling was high.

The records of the Second Church in Oxford have disappeared, but we find in the minutes of the First Oxford Church that Nicholas French was pastor there in 1844. This church requested admission into the Association in 1846 but their case was laid over and in 1849 the Association resolved not to receive them. Before this time the Free Communion Association in Oxford had lapsed and the members were joining elsewhere. Some of the members of the Free Communion Branch Church at Harris Street may have joined with the Regular Baptist Church there and this may have been the reason for the cautiousness of the Association. However they are reported in 1854 and in 1855 they reported a membership of 37, Isaiah W. Elliott being Clerk and Elder Freeman pastor. Elder Wm. Freeman was also pastor of the 1st Oxford Church. In 1857 the report of the committee appointed by the Association the previous year to visit the Second Regular Baptist Church in Oxford, was received. It was moved and carried that this Church be dropped from the minutes of the Association and that the committee who have reported, advise the members to unite with some other church. During 1857 at least fourteen members of the late Second Oxford Church were received into the First Oxford Church membership, this First Oxford Church holding meetings in the Harris Street Chapel as well as in their own Chapel.

Four years after the organizing of this Second Church in Oxford, eighteen of its members became the Charter members of the First Regular Baptist Church of Christ in Norwich, which was organized at the "old block school house" on Mr. Kellett's farm, just a little west of the village of Springford in 1842. The Council which set them apart as a church was composed of Elders and members from the First Oxford, Second Oxford, Zorra, Nissouri and Blenheim churches. Elder Nicholas French was the first pastor here from 1830-37. For the first ten years after organization their meetings were held in the school house, their own Chapel in Springford being opened in 1846. In 1858 a more commodious house of worship was built and about thirty years later the present church edifice was erected. C. Castle of Toronto was the preacher at the dedicatory services. A parsonage was purchased in 1881.

The First Oxford Church, the mother of these numerous churches in South Oxford, also prospered. Elder Mabee was the pastor for some years. In 1820 a committee was appointed to take up subscriptions to pay Elder Mabee for his labours in the Gospel. Elder Titus Finch was pastor in 1828. In April 1829 "employed Elder Mabee to serve as pastor for one year from this date for which he is to receive forty dollars payable in grain, wheat, rye or corn at the going price in Oxford at the expiration of the time. The grain is to be delivered at Jeremiah Finches. Elder Mabee is to hold regular meetings within the limits of the church and not be absent unless leaving someone to fulfill his appointments. Two months later "Voted that Elder Finch take half of the time and prospects with Elder Mabee. In 1831 Simon Mabee was chosen pastor of the First Oxford Church and Elder Titus Finch as pastor of the Zorra church. At this time there were over sixty members of the Oxford church. Later in the year it was voted that each male member shall pay for the expense of the church, one shilling each year on the first day of January. In 1833 employed Elder Isaac Elliott for one year as pastor who was to be paid once a month for visiting them. There were many baptized and joined the church in 1832, in 1835 and during 1841 forty two were received.

In February 1841 Elder Mabee offered to give the church one and one half acres of land on the ridge near the four corners (Pipers' Corners) on Lot No. 12 in the 2nd Concession of Oxford West, on the North-east corner of said Lot, for a meeting house and burying ground. The church accepted the land and agreed unanimously to build on it and appointed Elder Mabee to be their agent to solicit donations and subscriptions to the building fund. One would gather that the reason no building had been erected before this was because of the scattered membership who came from eight different townships. In the early years of the organization it would be more satisfactory to meet in school houses or homes in the different localities, but when the townships were able to organize churches it was more satisfactory to the membership in West Oxford to have their own building. Elder Mabee did not long enjoy this church house as he died in January 1842.

Later pastors of this West Oxford Church were: 1844 Elder Fred Harvey, 1846 Elder Eastwood, 1851 Elder Wm. Freeman, 1853 Elder George Wilson. Elder Wilson was employed at a salary of $400.00.

In September 1859 Elder George Wilson visited some friends at Mt. Elgin and sent around word that he would preach in the brick school house one mile south of Mt. Elgin for two evenings. Such interest was shown that he continued to preach week-day evenings for about two months. During this time about 48 were baptized and joined with the First Oxford Church, forming a branch of the church. At a meeting in September 1861 in Mr. Miller's shop arrangements were begun to organize the Mt. Elgin branch as a separate church, Mr. Wilson still being the pastor. After being dismissed by the First Oxford Church they met November

11th 1861 and organized as the Mt. Elgin Baptist Church with a membership of fifty. They were received into the Grand River South Association in 1862. Rev. I. E. Bott was pastor here in 1864 and Rev. J. Torrance in 1865.

Many were baptized also in the Beachville district by Elder George Wilson and in 1861 the members in this locality organized as a Branch of the West Oxford Church with Elder Wilson as pastor. A frame church was built in 1861 and bricked in later. In September 1866 a Council was called to recognize them as an independent church. They were received into the Association in 1867.

"On the 10th of July 1861 the Providence of God seemed to have directed Rev. George Wilson to East Nissouri, where he preached by invitation. The Word was blessed, many were hopefully converted and a considerable number baptized on a profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus." These are the minutes which were the records of the *East Nissouri* Baptist Church.

A Council was called to recognize the church of nearly forty members as a Regular Baptist Church. Rev. George Wilson would not be able to give a great deal of time to this new church and the minutes of July 7th 1866 record "That as Elder Vining had kindly offered to come and preach occasionally that we invite him forthwith." Rev. S. Jones of the Mission Church at St. Marys took charge of this field also, the beginning of 1868. In October 1864 Elder James Idore formerly a minister of the Free Will Baptist Church in Zorra was received as a member of the church and did some preaching.

In a little book called "Incidents in the Life of W.K. Mitchell, St. Marys" written by himself, he writes "As I was returning from the Ingersoll market in the year 1872, when five miles from St. Marys, in the township of Nissouri I passed a Baptist meeting house. A Baptist church had been organized in the neighborhood about twelve years previous, but the members had become cold and dead spiritually. The house was locked up. It stood on posts and as there was no fence surrounding it, a large flock of sheep had taken possession of the basement. As I rode on I felt sad and said in my heart 'O Lord, how sheep seem to be wiser than thy people.'" The result was that he organized a Sunday School and aroused the people in his aid. The work flourished under his leadership from 1872-75. From 1875-81 students served the church. Soon after this the East and West Nissouri churches united as a field. In 1926 the church edifice was rebuilt.

In 1881 some of the members of the Beachville church, wishing for a church home nearer than Beachville, organized a church in *West Oxford at Foldens*. The church building which is still in use was built by Mr. Bent, one of the members and a splendid workman, assisted by Mr. Davis, another member.

About 1860 Rev. George Wilson started preaching at Embro. In February 1862 the Embro members became a Branch of the West Oxford church with Rev. Wilson as pastor and reporting through the West Oxford church. During this year they built a church edifice at a cost of $700.00. During 1863 Rev. Wilson preached at Embro on alternate Sundays as well as having charge of the West Oxford church. He maybe preached at Beachville on the other Sundays, as it was also a Branch at this time. On February 10th 1866 the members from Embro (all who had paid their liabilities to the West Oxford church) were dismissed to form an independent church. Rev W. C. Beardsall was pastor of this church in 1867. The Baptist cause never got very strong in this Scotch Presbyterian centre and services were discontinued sometime during the next ten years. The church building was removed about 1890 and later the Presbyterians erected sheds on the grounds.

About 1825 Wm. Barker of Coventry England, migrated to Canada and settled in the township of Dereham, taking up nine hundred acres all in one block and in 1832 his family of eight or nine children followed and settled on the land. After they were settled Mr. Barker senior moved to Ingersoll, was converted and decided that he should tell the gospel message to his fellowmen. About 1837 at his own expense for material and labour he built a small circular building immediately at the rear of his own home on Thames street north. He supplied his own seating, bibles and hymn books and did the preaching. This was an independent Baptist cause and was continued from 1837 or 38 until the death of Mr. Barker. The pewter communion set of two trays, a large tankard and two large goblets, used here, also the pastor's bible and hymn book are kept by descendants.

Rev W. C. Beardsall of East Zorra became pastor of a church in Ingersoll in the fifties. In 1857 they erected a brick building on Albert street off King at a cost of $1400.00 capable of seating 450. This organization was recognized in 1858 and received into the Grand River South Association in 1859 with a membership of 34.

The membership of the West Oxford church in 1859 was 191 and in 1863 was 205. Services were held at the Chapel at Piper's Corners and at the Chapel on Harris street and sometimes at the Town Hall in Ingersoll. In May 1869 it was voted to have the Association in the Harris street Chapel on Friday and Saturday and on Sabbath in Deacon Harris' grove if fine and if not fine in the Town Hall at Ingersoll. The Association was held here in June. Covenant meetings were held at Mt. Elgin, Embro and Beachville as well as the other chapels as long as these remained Branch churches.

The Baptist organization which had built a chapel on Albert street Ingersoll was opposed very strongly to the Piper's Corners organization holding meetings in Ingersoll. In May 1858 a committee of five from the West Oxford church at Piper's Corners were appointed to try and form a union with Elder Beardsall's church on lines that could be agreed on. The union was not formed and on April 10th, 1860 the West Oxford church considered whether they would withdraw from Ingersoll as the Albert street church had sent them word that they would not confer with them as long as they had meetings in Ingersoll. On October 19th 1861 the West Oxford church went on record by a motion that they wished to be united with the Ingersoll church as one body and again appointed a committee to confer with them but the Albert street church would accept no offers of reconciliation while the West Oxford church held any meetings in Ingersoll. In November the matter was taken to Dr. Fyfe and Elder Stewart of Woodstock who afterwards conferred with the Albert street church and later advised the West Oxford church to build a chapel in Ingersoll. In 1866 a brick building was built on Thames street south in the Town of Ingersoll at a cost of $4000.00. The first services in the new chapel were held on September 9th, 1866 and it was decided to hold services there morning and evening. Rev Thos. Baldwin had become pastor of the church following the resignation of Rev George Wilson. On January 22nd 1867 it was resolved that the name "Regular Baptist Church of West Oxford" be changed to "*Thames Street Baptist Church, Ingersoll*." The Albert street church never became very strong numerically the membership in 1868 being reported as 30. But Rev W C Beardsall was a valued worker in the Association, serving as clerk and also on numerous committees. There are no reports from this organization after 1869 and it evidently disbanded. In November 1870 Rev W C Beardsall united with the Thames Street church where he afterwards became clerk and a very active worker. With the building of the new church in Ingersoll services were discontinued at Harris street and at Piper's Corners. The old building at Harris street was removed about 1868. A committee undertook to look after "the graveyard of the Second Baptist Church of West Oxford" and it is in a very well kept condition with a permanent upkeep fund. The church building at Piper's Corners was sold to Mr David French. The broken headstones from the small cemetery started by the church are said to be placed in the foundation of Mr French's barn.

On December 25th 1853 a few Baptist members met in Tillsonburg to take into consideration the propriety of forming themselves into a Regular Baptist church Deacon Thomas Robinson in the chair. A church of 17 members was organized and it was decided to call a Council to recognize them as a Regular Baptist body. This Council convened at the school house, Tillsonburg on the 13th of February 1854 Rev Ephraim Smith of the 1st Norwich church being chosen Moderator and Elder Fitch of Blenheim preaching the recognition sermon. Elder T. Rouse of Bayham gave the right hand of fellowship to the church which became a member of the Grand River Association. Silas Slaght was clerk of this newly formed church and Thomas Robinson and Silas Slaght the deacons. In 1856 the church was reorganized with but eleven members, only two of whom were members of the first organization. The preaching services here, which were held in the old Temperance Hall, were irregular until 1866 when this church joined with the Mt. Elgin church under Rev. John Torrance. In 1875 revival services were held for several weeks by Rev George and Mrs. Needham and two years later evangelistic services were again held under Rev Robert Cameron of Brantford. These greatly strengthened the church. The church worshipped in a small frame building which had been purchased from the Methodist church in 1878. In 1894 the present brick building was built and dedicated and in 1910 the large Sunday School wing was added.

CHAPTER VIII

NORTH OXFORD ORGANIZATION

While this church organization was being carried out in South Oxford, the Baptists had also been organizing in North Oxford.

Enos Wolverton, who was born in New York State, came to Canada about 1814. He settled in Blenheim township and the settlement which he started here was named Wolverton in 1848. Mr. Wolverton joined with the Free Communion Baptists either at Woodstock or in Blenheim as he was ordained by them following their June Association in 1832.

Rev. Jacob Goble came from New York State to Canada in 1811 and settled in the 1st Concession of Blenheim about 1816 being the first deacon of the Blenheim Free Communion Church which was organized in October 1823. He was chosen Moderator of the Free Communion Baptist Association of Upper Canada in 1836 and was an active leader and preacher. Some years later his son Wm. L. Goble became a storekeeper and postmaster the post office being named Goble's after him.

The Ruperts came into Blenheim township about 1825 from New Brunswick and Henry Rupert's daughter dying about 1833 he gave a plot of ground for a cemetery and his brother-in-law Frederick Burnett gave the adjacent land for a church. This church was organized as a Regular Baptist church about 1836 and was called the *First Blenheim* Baptist Church, being near Richwood in Blenheim township. Later it became known as the Riverside Regular Baptist church.

Sometime during the thirties or forties Enos Wolverton joined with this church.

Elder David Currey an ordained Baptist minister came from Lewiston, New York State about 1850 and settled near Wolverton in Blenheim. His sons David and Samuel bought the saw mill in Wolverton and James and George bought the gristmill. These mills burned in 1872 and then these four men went farming. Many from these families joined the First Blenheim Regular Baptist Church.

Also many Dawsons were members including Thomas, Elizabeth George W. and Jane. The earliest clerk known was Joshua Burnett who was followed by John Maynard. Stocktons were also prominent in the work here.

Apparently the Riverside Church held meetings in different sections of the township and just how early little chapels were built we do not know as the early minutes of this church got burned but we have record of buildings in Wolverton and in the Western part of the township (between Drumbo and Windfall) in 1852. Monthly covenant meetings were held in the Wolverton meeting house and one would expect also in the meeting house at Windfall.

In 1844 there was a *Second Blenheim Church*, with Rev. Hannan Fitch as pastor which worked with Esquesing. It was at this church that the new Association was formed in 1845. Whether this church was at Windfall or in the Goble settlement I do not know. It apparently lapsed.

On December 28th 1853 a Council met in the new meeting house at Windfall according to appointment to organize the *Second Baptist church in Blenheim*. The charter members of this church were members of the First Blenheim Church (Riverside) who lived nearer this meeting house, and included many Curreys and Griffiths. Isaac Griffith became the first clerk and was followed a year or two later by G. N. Currey. One of the Curreys became the first Deacon and Elder Wm. Haviland of the Riverside church also became pastor here. This church was received into the Association in 1854 and reported a membership of 32. In 1856 the membership was 77. On January 7th 1855 the property (being part of Lot Number 17 in the 9th Concession of Blenheim) was deeded to the Second Regular Baptist Church in Blenheim, for a church and burying ground, by Jeremiah Malcolm and his wife Elizabeth for the sum of £10.

The fall of 1856 there was some discussion in the Riverside church about building a new meeting house in Drumbo. Some time during the next two or three years it was decided to move the building of the Second Blenheim church into Drumbo a distance of two miles. This was attempted but the roof fell in, so a frame church was built in 1858 where the Drumbo rink now stands at a cost of $1800.00 and became known as the *Drumbo church*. The Association met here in 1860 and again in 1864. This building was sold to George Law when the new brick church was built in 1876, a short distance from the first site. A parsonage was purchased in 1922. The property between Drumbo and Windfall belonging to the Second Blenheim church is now the Drumbo cemetery, being deeded to the Cemetery Board by Wm. Pinkham and David Maynard of the said Baptist church.

In May 1867 the members of the First Blenheim church (Riverside) in the Wolverton district organized as a branch and services and baptisms are recorded there but their membership remained with the First Blenheim church until January 14th 1871 when twenty-six members received their letters to form a church at *Wolverton*. In 1868 a frame church building was erected at Wolverton, at a cost of $800.00. The lumber for the building was cut in Currey's saw mill the work being done largely by volunteer labor. G. N. Currey, Enos Wolverton and G. W. Dawson were the first trustees of the property which was given by David Currey and his wife Hannah. The recognition Council met on February 7th 1871 and organized the church. Geo. N. Currey and George W. Dawson were the first deacons. George N. Currey was the first clerk and served eight years being succeeded by A. Wolverton who served in this capacity forty-six years. The first pastor was Rev. Theophilus Booker.

Early pastors of the First Blenheim church of whom we have any record were Elder Roman Fitch Sr. who was here in 1824, Rev. Francis Pickle who died while here and is buried in the Riverside cemetery, Rev. John Bray 1849, Elder David Currey 1854-5, Elder Geo. Patten 1856-60, Elder Roman F. Fitch Jr. 1861-64, Rev. Christopher Perrin 1864-67.

In May 1867 Wolverton (still a branch church with membership in the Riverside church) Drumbo and the Riverside churches united as a field with Rev. George Wilson as pastor. In 1868 Rev. T. Booker became pastor and remained for several years. On March 6th 1873 "a meeting was called to determine which is best viz. to repair or rebuild church and continue worship or to dissolve and unite with sister churches. The gradual falling off of membership and attendance is noted, caused by removals and a growing inclination among the masses in favor of village churches. People are willing to go farther to secure better accommodation and with more inducements such as singing." Some were "willing to stick to the ship if it can float." The membership was 36 but a large proportion were quite unable to do anything towards support of the church. The decision which was finally reached was: That whereas several of our most prominent members have removed from our midst and others being contiguous to either the Drumbo or Wolverton churches and further considering the inconvenient situation of the church we, after prayerful consideration, think it would not tend to the interests of the body to incur the expense necessary in repairing or rebuilding the church and though sincerely regretting the circumstances which compel us to take the step, yet we think it conducive to our best interests to dissolve and unite so far as possible with sister Baptist churches. May 4th 1874. Quite a number had taken letters but there being "still quite a number like sheep without a shepherd" it was resolved to maintain the visibility of the church and keep our place in the Association, praying that the Good Shepherd will deign to bless our feeble efforts in building up his spiritual church. They secured Rev. H. Fitch as pastor and services were held that summer and maybe some the next year when the minutes are discontinued, the last record being on October 2nd, 1875.

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CHAPTER IX.

FREE WILL BAPTIST ORGANIZATION

In 1841 the Free Communion denomination joined the Free Will denomination and during the forties and fifties Free Will Evangelists came over from the United States and became very aggressive in Oxford County.

The Woodstock Free Communion church had gradually been drawing towards the Regular Baptist view point but there were those in its membership who differed. The Woodstock branch churches were two in Zorra township, and one each in Blenheim, Oxford and South Norwich townships.

In these smaller churches it was not possible to obtain ordained preachers except every two or three weeks and travelling evangelists were made welcome.

Elder Jacob Goble of Blenheim, Elder Reuben Crandall and Elder Martin Cross were the most frequent preachers in Blenheim and Zorra. Elder Marks whose wife was from Zorra township preached several times in 1830 in Oxford, Zorra, and Norwich townships. In 1838 he spent ten days and preached twelve sermons in different neighborhoods around Zorra. Other Free Will evangelists including Elder Starr soon preached in Mr. Rowell's Chapel on the 16th line of Zorra and introduced their own ideas of church doctrine and polity which were adopted by Mr. Rowell and most of the members. Two brothers, both Free Will Evangelists, moved into the county about this time. Their names were Jacob and Stephen Griffin and they were very zealous in spreading Free Will sentiments and starting Free Will causes in the county.

Several families of Regular Baptists moved into Zorra at this time and settled a few miles north of the Rowell Chapel. They came from near Peterboro where they had been members of the Colony Line Baptist Church, north of Peterboro, under the pastoral care of Rev J Gilmour. These families attended Mr Rowell's chapel but, being strong in their convictions of church faith and polity and naturally associating together refused to unite with them. They finally withdrew and held services of their own. In 1848 Rev J Gilmour of Peterboro visited these former members of his church and also Mr and Mrs Francis Malcolm, who had been members of his church in Aberdeen, Scotland, and who had settled in this neighborhood. Mr Gilmour advised these Baptists to organize a Baptist church and build a meeting house for themselves and he contributed sixty dollars (a magnificent sum in those days) towards the expense of building. Mr Malcolm gave one acre of land on the south west corner of his lot (number 16) on the 16th *Line* for the church, and he and his five sons, just growing into young manhood, also did most of the work of building the meeting house, being assisted by the other members. The neat frame building was opened for public service June 1848. Rev J Gilmour kindly coming from Peterboro to conduct the service. The church of eleven members was named the *East Zorra 16th Line* Baptist Church. Francis Malcolm and James Lockhart were the first deacons. There was no settled pastor for some years, the pulpit being supplied by Rev W C Beardsall (who had settled in East Zorra north of the church) Rev. Edward Topping of Woodstock Rev Walter Milne of the Queen's Bush, Watson Robinson a member of the church or Rev W H Landon.

Rev Mr Landon became the first settled pastor in 1852 followed by Rev E. Topping. In 1857 Rev John Gorrie preached a few times and was unanimously requested to become pastor. He was paid $200. per year in cash and this was supplemented by contributions of household supplies, feed for his horse, firewood etc. For seven years the church provided all his firewood by means of wood bees. He served here for eleven years. Mr and Mrs Gorrie are buried in the Innerkip cemetery.

A school teacher with Christadelphian views coming into the neighborhood, many in the community adopted Christadelphian doctrines. The sons of Francis Malcolm became leading Christadelphians and discussions and dissension in the church led to a split in March 1859 the church becoming nearly equally divided between the two parties. For two years the Christadelphians held the chapel, the Baptists obtaining possession again in 1861. The church joined the Grand River South Association in 1866. It transferred to the Brant Association in 1871 and again in 1888 to the Woodstock Association. A white brick church was built during 1877. Services were carried on here until 1937 when, owing to the small membership and need of repairs, the organization disbanded and joined elsewhere.

In the spring of 1866 Rev Mr Gorrie assisted by Rev. W Milne held three weeks of special services. Amongst the converts at this time was George Baird of Bright who afterwards built a Baptist chapel at *Bright* and a church was organized in 1866, Rev J Gorrie acting as pastor there also. This church joined the Grand River North Association and carried us for a number of years. The Baird family moving away it weakened and finally discontinued.

The Free Will Baptists continued to meet in the Rowell chapel for a time. Then on the second day of September 1848 a church was organized at the white school house on the 10th Line of East Zorra (tollgate) named "*The First Free Baptist church of East Zorra.*" Elder Stephen Griffin conducted the organizing and gave the right hand of fellowship to the thirty members. Benjamin Rowell and Samuel Tree were appointed deacons and Wm. R. Brown, clerk. At the first covenant meeting eighty two spoke and nearly one hundred partook of the first commemoration of the Lord's Supper by the church.

Apparently all those for miles around believing in Free Will doctrines joined this church, as the membership included the Rowells and others from the 14th Line organization, the Browns from the 12th Line, Levi N Parry and Abigail Burtch from the Oxford Church, Woodstock, and the Trees from the 12th Line. Services were held in the tollgate school house on the 10th Line.

In 1851, because of the size of the field, they commenced to hold services alternately in the 12th Line school house and in Brown's school house on the 10th Line.

In February 1854 land was purchased on the south east corner of Lot No. 11 in the 16th Concession (17th Line) by trustees of a Free Will Baptist church, members of the First Free Baptist church of East Zorra. A chapel was erected and services were held here until sometime in the eighties. In 1880 or 81 the chapel was sold and moved to Innerkip where it became the C.O.F. Hall.

On February 26th 1856 the *Second Free Will Baptist Church of East Zorra* was organized under the superintendence of Rev Jacob Griffin. Four were duly acknowledged as members. Two were added the next day and by the end of the year the membership was 22. Land was purchased and a chapel was erected on Lot 24 in the 11th Concession being on the sideroad two miles north of the present village of Hickson. During the fifty five years that this church functioned nearly two hundred people were baptized and joined the church.

In Blenheim township the Free Communion Branch church which was organized in 1832 with Rev Jacob Gable as Deacon, would have his continuous care as well as help from visiting ministers. The same supply often preached at both the Blenheim church and at the Rowell chapel. Apparently Blenheim had no church building, the meetings being held in the Gobles school house. In the summer of 1846 Rev W C Beardsall of East Zorra became pastor of the Blenheim and Zorra churches, preaching regularly every two weeks at each church for nearly three years.

In 1839 a family named Kennedy settled in South Blenheim near Richwood. Being Free Will Baptists they were instrumental, with the aid of the Griffin brothers, in organizing a Free Will church in the early forties. In 1850, Elder Stephen Griffin being pastor they built a rough cast meeting house at Richwood at a cost of $1000. Meetings were held here until they gradually discontinued about 1877. The church building was sold a little before 1900 and the sheds in 1900. A cemetery had been started in connection with the church and the property is now the Richwood cemetery.

Pastors of the Riverside (1st. Blenheim) Regular Baptist church preached in the Gobles' school house in the fifties. Any Free Communion

Baptists here who had become Free Will Baptists would have joined the Richwood church.

In 1858 a branch of the Drumbo Regular Baptist church was formed at Gobles Corners and in May 1868 a Regular Baptist church called the Gobles Corners Church was organized with James G. Goble as clerk and his father Wm. L. Goble (a son of Elder Jacob Goble) as Deacon. Mr. Richard Kipp gave land for a church building and a white brick building was erected in 1872. This building later burned down and was rebuilt on the same site and reopened in 1898 as the Creditville Baptist church. The work discontinued here about 1925 the remaining members joining neighboring churches and the building being sold in the spring of 1939.

In Oxford township the Free Communion Branch church had apparently used the Harris Street Chapel when the regular Baptists were not needing it. The Free Will evangelists gathered together a nucleus for a church here and organized a church at Salford about 1850. Elder Stephen Griffin, Elder George Desmeckes and Rev. Henry Blackmer all served this church. It later joined with the Regular Baptists being reorganized and recognized as a Regular Baptist church on March 20th 1877. Rev. J. Dempsey was the Moderator and Rev. C. Goodspeed clerk of the council. Rev. E. J. Lobb was the first pastor of this church of fifty-one members.

A Free Will Baptist organization was also formed at Sweaburg which united with the Methodists and Presbyterians in building a Union Meeting House, each organization electing one trustee to the property and each having equal privileges in the use of the building. An agreement to this effect was drawn up in 1866 and registered in the registry office at Woodstock. Of these three church groups only the Methodists survived and the organization now belongs to the United Church of Canada.

In South Norwich the Free Communion church sent delegates regularly to the Free Communion Baptist Association. In 1848 the membership is reported as 62. Elder Ephraim Smith was pastor at this time. We have no record of any Free Will organization having been formed in this neighborhood.

A Free Will church was erected in Woodstock in 1860 at the corner of Peel and Reeve streets. Rev. W. H. Trowbridge was the pastor here in 1868-69. Nothing is known of the activities of this church or just when it disbanded.

In East Zorra the First Free Baptist church got into difficulties in 1881 over evidence which one of its members (an ordained Elder and travelling preacher) gave at a law-suit and which was considered "unchristianable". He refused to acknowledge the charge made against him by the church and was consequently expelled. He appealed to the Quarterly Meeting and they asked the church to reconsider his case. In March 1882, at a meeting of the church the motion to reconsider the case from the beginning was lost. The May meeting of the Oxford Quarterly Meeting turned the church out of the Association. In June the church voted on disbanding, the vote being a tie. They concluded to canvass the church on the subject. As there are no more minutes the organization evidently didn't revive.

However later a new organization was formed in this district as the South Zorra Free Will church. This organization, as the former one, had meetings in a Hall on the east side of the 13th Line on Lot 8. In 1876 a white brick church was built on Lot 7 in the 13th Concession (13th Line). Rev. Robert Martin was their first pastor and during his pastorate the church was built. In 1876 under Rev. Thos. MacElroy they commenced working with the Second Free Baptist church of East Zorra (13th Line.) In 1907 the 13th Line church commenced working with the 16th Line Regular Baptist Church and the 16th Line church joined with Tavistock Regular Baptist church in forming a field. The 13th Line church finally disbanded and the church was sold in 1937. The grounds are still held as a pioneer cemetery.

The South Zorra church withdrew from the 16th Line church in 1928 and joined the Union of Regular Baptists and in 1933 withdrew from this Union and joined the Independent Fellowship of Baptist Churches.

Early Free Will ministers whose names appear as serving these Oxford churches are: Jacob Griffin, Stephen Griffin, George Rosacker, Michael Doyle, Stephen Tree, Wm. H. Trowbridge, L. S. Parmelee, Henry Blackmar, Robert Martin, Thos. MacElroy, Chas. Clark, George Moore, Mr. Webster and C. W. Lane.

Oxford churches held a quarterly meeting and they belonged to a Free Will Association which took in Iona, Middlemass, Round Plains, London, Bloomsburg, Townsend Centre and Brook, where fellowship, prayer and testimony meetings are reported as being held.

It is stated that in 1868 there were 58 Free Will Baptist Churches in Canada, one half of which were west of Toronto.

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CHAPTER X.

LATER ORGANIZATIONS

About 1872 a sabbath school was commenced in the west end of Woodstock by the Oxford church of Woodstock and was carried on successfully, the meetings being held on Dundas Street West.

On June 18th 1878 the Young People's Christian Association in connection with the church reported that they proposed to buy a lot to establish a sabbath school in the West end and asked the liberty to have the deed made to the trustees of the church, which request was granted. A lot was procured on the corner of Hunter street and Vansittart Ave. and in the spring of 1879 the building was erected. Preaching services were held here at 6.30 P.M.

"But this location on Vansittart Ave. did not prove a wise choice. During the years the services were held on Dundas Street West, the attendance at the sabbath school was large and the occasional preaching by the students was well attended and a deep interest felt."

But the Mission on Vansittart Ave. went down and was finally discontinued. On April 13th 1883 an offer of $900 for the property was accepted. Brethren Wolverton and McLaurin of the Oxford Church always felt that it was wrong to give up the west end school and agitated re-opening and trying to recover the lost opportunity, this time by starting a church for the convenience of the west end members. "Persistent plead-ing at length got the members interested. Lots were purchased at the corner of Hunter and Oxford streets for the sum of $1400.00 and a brick building capable of seating three hundred persons was erected." Forty two members of the Oxford Church were granted letters in October 1890 in order that they might organize. The organizing meeting was held on Nov 7th Dr. E. W. Dadson being chairman and W. J. Chave secretary of the meeting. The church chose the name *The Oxford Street Baptist Church.*

A farewell social was held in the parent church to give expression to the good wishes of those who remained to those who formed the new church. About forty more took their letters to the Oxford St. Church during the first year.

Recognition services were held at the church on the 29th of December 1890, the church joining the Woodstock Association of the Ontario and Quebec Convention.

In 1928 during the Convention controversy they withdrew and joined the Union of Regular Baptists and in July 1931 when this Union divided, they became members of the Independent Fellowship of Baptist churches.

On November the 18th 1890, following the organizing of the Oxford Street Baptist church, the Oxford Church changed its name to "*The First Baptist Church.*"

On January 14th 1877 a sabbath school was organized in the east end of Woodstock by the Oxford (First) Church. In 1886 a lot was purchased on Centre Street and in 1888 a building was erected. This East End Mission is still carried on by the First Church.

In January 1875 Rev. C. Goodspeed of the Woodstock church baptized seven candidates at Strathallan on the 13th Line of East Zorra. On February 5th the Woodstock church granted letters to the members, for the purpose of forming a church at *Strathallan*. This church was organized on February 9th 1875. Services were carried on in a frame chapel for about ten years but the cause never got very strong here and the work was discontinued. For most of the ten years this church and the East Zorra 16th Line church worked as a field.

During the pastorate of Rev. J. D. McColl at the Drumbo Church, the Needham Brothers (Thomas, William and Ben) were procured as evangelists. They also held services at Plattsville. Following these special services, on January 30th 1880 a church of fourteen members was organized at the home of Mr. James Greenfield, *Plattsville*. Ten of these members received letters of dismission from the Drumbo church in order to organize in Plattsville. Rev. J. D. McColl of Drumbo became the pastor and assisted in the organization. James Greenfield and Charles Baird were elected the first Deacons and James Baird the first Clerk and Treasurer. Archibald Baird was the first candidate for baptism being baptized in the Drumbo church by Rev. J. D. McColl. Later baptisms were usually in the river Nith. Twenty members were added to the church the first year. Recognition services were held in the Plattsville Town Hall on the 26th of February 1880 and the following third of June the church was received into the Brant Association at their gathering in the village of Onondaga. During recent years they were an Independent Baptist cause and they have now disbanded.

In 1879 Rev. J. H. Moore was called to the pastorate of the Tillsonburg Church and he was induced to take up an appointment at Brownsville. It was not long before the Brownsville members of the Tillsonburg church applied for dismission for the purpose of organizing at Brownsville. The church was organized on January 29th 1930 with thirteen members. In February plans were started towards building a House of Worship. This building was erected and paid for that fall and dedicated on November 14th 1930, Professor Torrance being the speaker.

A Council convened at Brownsville on May 25th 1930 and duly recognized the organization as a Regular Baptist Church. Brownsville worked with Tillsonburg church under the same pastor until 1934, when they withdrew and engaged a pastor as a separate cause.

In 1936 they withdrew from the Convention of Ontario and Quebec and joined the Union of Regular Baptists.

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CHAPTER XI.

CO-OPERATION

The early Baptist churches in Ontario being in widely separated districts knew but little of each other. These early Baptists in Oxford had come mostly from the United States and their intercourse and fellowship were with the States. But the early eastern Ontario Baptists mostly came from and had their fellowship with Great Britain. Efforts were repeatedly made towards co-operation among the Baptists of the Province, strong convictions and a strong feeling of independence making progress towards union slow. Early churches in Eastern Ontario were all open communionists but they gradually drew toward the strict communion practice. Baptists of Western Ontario were perhaps about equally divided on communion during the first quarter century the drift being towards strict communion. (Fitch)

A three day conference was held at Townsend in 1818 called the Clinton Baptist Conference. Only four churches—Clinton, Charlotteville, Townsend and Oxford (township)—being represented. Elder Titus Finch and Elder Fairchild were present, Deacon Zachariah Burtch being the representative from the First Oxford Church. At this conference there was organized "The Upper Canada Domestic Missionary Society for the sending of the Gospel to the destitute of this Province," which was the first co-operative Missionary effort on the part of Baptists of the province. (Schutt) In December 1818 the Oxford Church appointed a committee of seven to act in the Missionary Society in Oxford.

In 1819 the Oxford Church joined with others in forming the Western Association at Charlotteville. Later it joined the Grand River Association which was formed soon after this. In 1830 delegates from Oxford (township) church were appointed to attend the Conference at Malahide, these delegates being Elder S. Mabee and Brothers Darrus Cross, Nicholas French and Zachariah Burtch. In June 1834 they appointed delegates to the Association. In 1850 delegates were appointed to the Upper Canada Association. In June 1853 the Oxford church voted "to accept as sure the Articles that the Association formed in 1836 and recommended to the churches."

An Association of the Free Communion Churches of Upper Canada had been formed immediately following the organizing of the separate churches. An effort was made in 1839 to form a union between these churches and the Free Will churches around London, which belonged to an Association of churches in New York State. All these churches were far from others of similar faith but no union was formed.

From the Baptist Historical Year Book of 1900 we learn that in the summer of 1837 a deputation from the Eastern Association (Niagara District) and a committee of the open communionists (I think Free Communionists would be more correct) of which Elder Landon (of the Oxford Free Communion church, Woodstock) was a leading member decided to call a convention of all the Baptist churches in the Province to be held at Townsend the third week in October for the promotion of brotherly unity and co-operation in missionary and publication work. The committee of open communionists agreed "that the best interests of the cause in general, and the Baptist denomination in particular require that a union should be effected in so far at least as that the efforts of the two bodies may be united in the cause of God and the benevolent enterprises of the day. The committee had learned from the deputation "with the liveliest satisfaction, that the difference in our respective practice with regard to the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is all that at this moment prevents the most perfect union." The committee recommended that three successive Monday evenings immediately preceding the convention "be solemnly set apart by every church in the Province for special prayer to Almighty God for heavenly wisdom to direct his servants at said Convention." The Convention assembled. "All were agreed that it were desirable to cast away all names by which parties among us are designated and unitedly to adopt the simple name of Baptists."

Elder Landon and Deacon A. Burtch were appointed delegates to this convention by the Woodstock church and apparently Woodstock church joined the Grand River Baptist Association at this time as in May 1840 Elder Landon and four laymen were appointed delegates to the Association at Waterford. However in July 1840 they withdrew from the Association—no reason is given for their withdrawal. In January 1842 the church voted to restrict the communion to baptized believers and so came into harmony with the practice of the regular Baptist churches of the Province. In 1843, when the Canada Baptist Union was formed, Rev. N. Bosworth, who was pastor of the Woodstock Church at this time, became president of the Union. This Union was not lasting. The Regular Baptist Union of Canada which was formed at St. George in 1848 also failed. The communion question caused the greatest difficulty to co-operation. "In 1840 there was no Convention, no college, no paper and the denomination seemed hopelessly divided." (J. H. Farmer) All societies had lapsed owing to dissension.

In October 1851 in an old Presbyterian chapel in the city of Hamilton the Regular Baptist Missionary Society of Upper Canada was organized. This society took in the churches of the Grand River North and Grand River South Associations. "Around it gathered in succession the Educational (1858) Superannuated Ministers (1864) Foreign Missionary (1866) Church Edifice (1867) and Publication (1883) Societies." (J. H. Farmer)

These Societies met in Annual Convention. The Directors of these Conventions include many members of Oxford Churches. Archibald Burtch of Woodstock was vice-president in 1860 and John Bower of Ingersoll was vice-president in 1862;

The Canadian Baptist Missionary Convention East, with the country east of Kingston for its field, was organized on similar lines in 1858.

In 1888 the Home Mission Conventions, East and West, the Foreign Mission Society, Church Edifice Society, and all other interests of the Convention, became merged in the *Baptist Convention* of Ontario and Quebec.

The *Free Communionists* in the United States had joined with the Free Will churches in 1841. The Woodstock Church and the other churches in Oxford which had formed the Free Communion Association of Upper Canada did not join the Free Will Body with the rest of their denomination, though it was here and because of them that the movement started.

In 1851 the Woodstock church applied for fellowship in the Grand River Association and a committee was appointed to inquire into their faith and practice. But it was not until 1887 that it joined the Association and the (now) Ontario and Quebec Convention.

1819-1845.

The minutes of the Grand River Association of 1844 (the twenty-fifth Anniversary) which have been preserved report 36 churches with a total membership of 2002. Oxford churches reporting were

(Organized)
1836—1st Blenheim (Riverside)—Rev. Francis Pickle.
2nd Blenheim—Rev. Hosea Fitch,
1808—1st Oxford.
1826—2nd Oxford (Harris Street)
1833—1st Norwich (Springford)
1837—2nd Norwich (Burgessville)
1836—*Zorra* (near Zorra Station)
1838—Nissouri (West Nissouri)

This meeting which convened at Beamsville in June decided to meet again in October with the *Second Baptist Church* in Oxford to consider the school. The Montreal College was a contentious subject at this time. It was also resolved to appoint one delegate from each church to investigate the expediency of dividing this Association

1845-1858

Thirteen churches were set off from this body to go with certain churches set off from the Long Point Association, thus to form a new Association, these churches to send delegates to meet with the Second Blenheim Church in June 1845 to organize a new Association. This Association retained the name *Grand River Association*, these churches being in the Grand River Area.

There had also been some changes in the church organizations. 1st *Blenheim* and 1st and 2nd *Norwich* churches were reported in this new Associational grouping. The Association met with the 2nd Blenheim church and yet eight years later we find a new organization given the name of *Second Baptist Church in Blenheim* and received into the Association the following year (1854) with a membership of 62. In October 1854 the Association had met with the *Second Baptist Church* in Oxford and yet in 1848 this same church requested admission into the Association. It was received in 1850 and continued until 1857. *The First Oxford Church* remained active and sent their pastor Elder Wm. Freeman and Harrison Forbes as delegates to the Hamilton Convention in October 1851. At *Zorra* the former church had become extinct and another organization was formed and received in 1849 with Elder Isaac Elliott as pastor and Benjamin and Winchell Vandecar as delegates. The *Nissouri* organization also lapsed. The township of Nissouri being divided in 1851 West Nissouri became part of Middlesex County and the West Nissouri Church on reorganizing in 1856 was not in the Grand River Association.

On January 22nd 1846 the First Oxford church appointed Elder Mabee and Brothers Aldridge and Cragg to assist in organizing the first church in *Dereham*. This church joined the Grand River Association in 1846 it reported Jesse S. Woodward as clerk and James Bodwell Jr. as a delegate. The membership was 48. In 1854-56 Elder Isaac Elliott was pastor and J. W. Waggoner Mt. Elgin Post Office, clerk.

Tillsonburg in Dereham township was organized in 1853 and joined this Association in 1854.

On March 16th 1848 the 1st Church of West Oxford "Resolved to consider the members of the church in East Oxford as a Branch and grant them the liberty to receive members. At the Grand River Associational gathering in 1849 the *Oxford East* Church of 16 members was received, the delegates from the church being Elder Jas. Kenny, Deacon Samuel Mabee, Brothers Israel Gibbs, Daniel Smith and Chester Gibbs. In 1851 Rev. W. C. Beardsall was pastor here.

1856-1900

On Saturday June 14th 1856 at the 13th Annual Meeting of this Association held in the First Regular Baptist Church in Brantford, the motion dividing the Association into two was carried—twenty two churches forming the Grand River Association North and twenty five forming the Grand River Association South. These Associations were composed of strict communion Baptist churches.

The *Grand River North Association* included 1st *Blenheim*, 2nd *Blenheim* (called Drumbo in 1859), *Zorra* (sometimes called East Zorra and sometimes South Zorra) no detailed reports after 1860, *Bright* reported in 1858, *Golden Corners* reported in 1858 and *Tavistock* reported in 1860. This Association met in the 1st Blenheim church in 1857 in Drumbo in 1900 and again in 1904.

The *Grand River South Association* included *Dereham*, 1st *Norwich*, 2nd *Norwich*, *Tillsonburg*, *West Oxford*, (1st Oxford) *Woodstock* received in 1857 *Otterville* received in 1858, *Ingersoll* received in 1858. *Mt. Elgin* received in 1862, *East Oxford* received in 1862, *Beachville* received in 1867 *East Zorra 14th Line* joined in 1868, *Salford* received in 1877 *Brownsville* received in 1880, *Oxford West* (Foldens) received in 1881 and *Norwich* received in 1884.

The Oxford East organization received in 1849 is not the East Oxford church received in 1862, but seems to be an earlier organization of East Oxford Baptists which lapsed. The membership was small. Its location is not mentioned. The first West Oxford church moved to Ingersoll in 1864 and a new church was organized in West Oxford at Foldens in 1881.

Neither is the location of the Dereham church known. The only records we have of it are from organization in 1846 until 1856.

In 1868 a committee was appointed from both South and North Associations to consult on the propriety of dividing the two Associations into three.

The proposal did not find favor in the South.

The North Association in 1869 adopted as much of the report as related to the churches of this Association and divided into the Midland Counties Association and the Brant Association. The Brant Association took in all Oxford churches in the former Grand River North Association with the exception of Tavistock, which joined the Midland Counties Association and later the Guelph Association. The first meeting of the Brant Association was held with the Riverside church near Richwood in Blenheim, on Friday June 3rd 1870.

Fourteen churches reported including 1st *Blenheim* (Riverside) *Bright, Drumbo, Gobles Corners.* In 1871 the *East Zorra 16th Line* transferred to the Brant Association and also that year Wolverton was received. In 1883 the newly formed church at Plattsville was received.

At the thirty-first Annual Meeting of the Grand River Association (South) held at Ingersoll, the re-adjustment of Associational boundaries was considered and changes adopted, the new Associations to meet in June 1885. Prof. J. H. Farmer was moderator of the meeting and Rev. H. Woodward was secretary-treasurer at this time. Prof. N. Wolverton was appointed Moderator of the new Woodstock Association, which met for the first time at Springford in 1885. The following is taken from a circular letter sent out by Prof. Wolverton, Prof. Farmer and Rev. H. Woodward:—"To the members of the churches of the Woodstock Association, Dear Brethren and Sisters.—Another year having passed away it is again our privilege as a committee to address you. We are doubtless all forcibly reminded of the changes that each year brings with it, but to us as an Association this year has been full of very radical changes. We are a new Association. From being one of the oldest and largest we meet this year as one of the smallest and newest. Instead of numbering as heretofore over 4800 we shall now amount to little more than a third of that number. While in this there may be some disadvantages there are certainly many advantages. Any society may become so large as to be unwieldy. Old institutions may get into ruts out of which it is sometimes very difficult to remove them. A few come to the front as prominent workers while the many so merge their individuality into the great body that they are scarcely seen and their influence is little felt. Our numbers being so much smaller we shall become more generally and thoroughly acquainted and shall thus realize more of the benefit of the Christian intercourse that results from these gatherings. Many churches can have the Woodstock Association meet with them which could not by any possibility have invited the old Association with its large number of delegates. We venture to hope and remind you that the great benefit to us will be, better opportunity for more effective work for Jesus Christ. Our Association is designed to be an efficient means for mutual helpfulness and for aggressive work."

This Association included all the Oxford Churches in the Grand River South Association and also Burford and Scotland churches in Brant County and Goshen and Windham Churches in Norfolk County. East Zorra 16th Line transferred from the Brant Association to the Woodstock Association.

1907 1908

At the Ninth Annual Meeting of the Woodstock Association held at Tillsonburg 1906 it was "Resolved that the delegates of the Woodstock Association assembled in Tillsonburg June 3rd, having heard a statement from Brother Grant of Ingersoll, regarding the recommendation of the Convention meeting in Montreal re the alteration of Associational boundaries desire to express their sympathy with the same, and appoint a committee of five brethren to confer with a similar committee of the Grant and Norfolk Associations agreeing to abide by the recommendations of such committee if agreeable to the churches. The Brant Association also appointed a committee at their Annual gathering held at Paris.

Pursuant to agreement the delegates from the Brant Association met with those of the Woodstock Association in the Oxford Street church Woodstock in 1907. A committee was appointed to consider the question of union and report to the meeting. They reported as follows: I. That the Union of the Brant and the Woodstock Associations is desirable and that we do now so unite to form an Association. II. That as far as it may be deemed necessary District meetings be held with the smaller churches, two or more such meetings to be held during the year. III. That the name of the new Association be The Oxford and Brant Association. After discussion this was adopted and Rev W. L. Newton was elected the first Moderator.

In 1960 a readjustment of Associations was discussed throughout the Convention. Oxford-Brant Association was not in favor of the proposed plan of enlarging the Associations and no change was made here.

List of Organizations

1800-present—First Oxford Regular Baptist in West Oxford Township.
    Moved to Ingersoll about 1844 and changed the name to Thames Street Baptist Church, Ingersoll in 1867
1820-present—First Free Communion Baptist in the town of Oxford
    (Woodstock) joined Ontario-Quebec Convention 1857
1820—about 1845—Blenheim Free Communion
1824—about 1845—south Norwich Free Communion.
1830—180 —Zorra Free Communion.
1833—became extinct—reorganized 1849 — 1900 Zorra Regular Baptist
    (Zorra P.O.)
1833 reorganized 1856-present—West Nissouri Regular Baptist
    (now in Middlesex)
1833-1844—reorganized 1849 1867 Second Oxford Regular Baptist.
1833-1875—First Blenheim (Riverside, near Richwood)
1830-1840—Zorra 16th Line Free Communion.
1834-about 1844—Second Oxford Free Communion.
1838-present—First Norwich (Springford)
1837 present—Second Norwich (Burgessville)
About 1837-about 1850—Ingersoll, Independent [illegible]
——1845—Second Blenheim—unknown location.
184 to 1870—Richwood Free Will Baptist.
1843-1858—Dereham Regular Baptist—unknown location.
1849-1863—First Free Will of East Zorra.
1849-185 —East Oxford Regular Baptist, location unknown.
1850-1908—East Zorra 16th Line Regular Baptist.

About 1850—Salford Free Will—Reorganized 1877 as Regular to present.
1850-present—Tillsonburg Regular.
1858-1882—Ingersoll Reg. Baptist, Albert Street.
1859-present—Second Blenheim, now Drumbo Regular.
1857-1871—a Branch church 1871 present—Wolverton Regular Baptist.
1858 1918—Second Free Will of East Zorra ((12th Line)
1858-present—Otterville Regular Baptist.
1859-1861—a branch church. 1861-present—Mt. Elgin Regular Baptist.
1859-1862—a Branch church 1862-present—East Oxford Regular Baptist.
1860-187 —Embro Regular Baptist.
1861-present—Beachville Regular Baptist.
1861-1864—lapsed 1877 present—East Nissouri Regular
1862-a few years—Woodstock Free Will.
1866-a few years—Bright Regular Baptist.
1869-1886—a Branch church. 1886 1936 — Gobles Corners, also called Creditville, Regular
1864-a few years—Sweaburg Free Will
1868-1918—Tavistock Regular Baptist.
1870-present—South Zorra Free Will (13th Line)
1875-1885—Strathallan Regular Baptist.
1880-1936—Plattsville Regular Baptist.
1880-present—Brownsville
1881-present—West Oxford (Foldens) Regular
1884-present—Norwich Regular.
1889-present—Oxford Street, Woodstock.
1926-present—[illegible] Union of Regular Baptists.

It is surprising to note that of all the organizations started during the first fifty years of settlement in Oxford, only four continue to serve—West Oxford of 1809 now serving at Ingersoll, First Church Woodstock since 1822, Springford since 1830 and Burgessville since 1837. The village churches organized in more recent years are of course more abiding.

SUNDAY SCHOOLS

There was a Regular Baptist Sabbath School Convention in connection with the Grand River South Association, composed of two delegates from each sabbath school in connection with the churches of the Association. Annual meetings were held on the Thursday following the Associational meetings and at the same place. A Constitution was drawn up in 1870.

In September 1885 an agitation was started for the organization of a Baptist Sunday School Society. The subject was dealt with by the Home Missionary Convention in October who recommended that Sunday School work be made prominent in the annual discussions at each of the Associations. In April 1886, at a meeting of the Board of the Home Mission Society a committee was appointed to look after the interests of our schools generally. This committee sent out forms for statistics, the first returns being received in 1886. This committee later acted under authority of both the Home and Foreign Mission Societies.

Brant Association on June 1st 1887 by motion pledged itself to support and sustain the work of the Sunday School Committee and appointed Pastor Fraser of Gobles as Sunday School secretary for the Association.

The Grand River South Sabbath School Convention, which had been holding its meetings following the Associational gathering, in 1886 decided to hold its sessions in the afternoon and one address in the evening of the second day of the Associational meeting.

B.Y.P.U.

A Fraternal Union of all Young People's Societies in Baptist churches in Ontario and Quebec was organized May 4th and 5th 1893. This Union was formed for the unification of Baptist Young People their increased spirituality their stimulation in Christian service, their edification in Scripture knowledge their instruction in Baptist history and doctrine and in church history generally and their enlistment in Missionary activity through existing denominational organizations.

Mr. James Baird of Plattsville was on the Board of Managers for 1892-93.

THE BOARD OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

At the Ontario and Quebec Convention in October 1924 the Sunday School work and Young People's work were united under one Board called "The Board of Religious Education of the Baptist Convention." This Board is composed of a Sunday School committee of fifteen members and a Young People's Committee of fifteen members, these committees submitting all plans to the Board for its approval. The Board of Religious Education is responsible for the administration of all religious educational work in our Convention

DISTRICT MEETINGS

The Regular Baptist Ministerial Association of the County of Norfolk in session June 11th 1858 in the Regular Baptist church at Scotland wrote to "the Regular Baptist Association Grand River South" respectfully recommending to the serious consideration of this Association the propriety and necessity of holding quarterly meetings in this Association for the following purposes viz. 1st. To afford the ministers of the Association an opportunity of more energetic intercourse and consultation with each other, for their mutual benefit and improvement and on such subjects of pastoral labours and duties as are constantly recurring amongst us. 2nd For consulting together on Associational work. 3rd. That more frequent opportunity may thus be given for the discussion of denominational subjects together with the rousing up the energies of declining churches, the encouraging the drooping spirits of ministers, the giving of timely counsels, so as to prevent the frequent difficulties in churches and betwixt churches and otherwise cultivating a higher tone of Christian life in the denomination and a more general and mutual feeling for one another in all the various branches of Christian work.

These quarterly meetings were held regularly in the Grand River South Association from 1858-1877

The need for District meetings was mentioned when the Oxford-Brant Association was formed and provision made for two or more such meetings to be held yearly

These meetings were the forerunners of the present Pastors' and Members' Conferences which meets several times during the year

CHAPTER XII.

WOODSTOCK COLLEGE

The need for a good academy which would also prepare young men for the ministry led to much thought and discussion throughout the denomination. Montreal Theological College after bravely struggling for years had succumbed for want of support and sympathy. Other projects also fell through. But the idea of founding a college of some kind had never been long absent from the minds of the leading men in the denomination.

In 1856 the plan for a Literary and Theological School was submitted to the people. The other schools and plans had been for Theological training only. This new school plan included ladies as well as men, as two schools could not be built. Rev. R. A. Fyfe of the Bond Street Church, Toronto, was the leader in this plan. He held decided opinions as to the value of education under Christian influences and saw that, at that time, not one in fifty of the residents in the rural districts could obtain a high school training without leaving home.

Three places desired to have the school—Fonthill, Brantford, and Woodstock. All guaranteed financial help and the offers of Woodstock parties were considered most satisfactory and were accepted. The land for the school was given by Mr. Archibald Burtch and Woodstock citizens guaranteed $16,000.00 including the value of the site towards the school. $5,000.00 of this was to be raised in Oxford County.

The first important meeting of subscribers was held at Woodstock in March 1857 when the subscribers formally organized as "The Canadian Literary Institute" and elected their first Board of trustees. Mr. Wm. Winter was elected chairman, Mr. John Hatch of Woodstock vice-chairman, Mr. James Kintrea of Woodstock treasurer and Mr. E. W. Rodwell of Mt. Elgin secretary.

On the 23rd of June 1857 the corner stone was laid by Archibald Burtch. Rev. Dr. Ryerson, superintendent of Education for Ontario was present and gave one of the addresses.

The workmen engaged in the building were billeted with Mr. and Mrs. Archibald Burtch.

Hard times came to the country during 1857-59 making the collection of pledges towards the building fund a difficult one. Deacon Archibald Burtch, who was for some time treasurer, mortgaged his own dwelling house in order to carry on the work. It was not until the 4th of July 1860 that the school was opened. Only one flat of dormitories was finished at that time. After a term of six weeks the school closed for the summer vacation and during the vacation Dr. Fyfe canvassed for the school and raised nearly enough to finish another flat of dormitories.

It is said of Dr. Fyfe that "he was a qualified leader and a man of action, with a devotion to duty as he understood it that was absolute and unfaltering. He made our educational work the centre of our denominational life." He became the first Principal of the Institute.

The fall term opened with seventy-nine students enrolled, which gave practical proof that such a school was needed and appreciated.

On the morning of the 8th of January 1861 the building was entirely destroyed by fire. This calamity elicited instant sympathy. The citizens of Woodstock at a public meeting decided to place the old Woodstock Hotel at the disposal of the Literary Institute trustees, rent free, and the work of the school was carried on here while the new buildings were being erected. The Hotel furniture was used, for which they paid part of its value.

The Insurance Companies paid over the $6,000.00 insurance which had been placed on the Institute but the trustees were still a few thousand dollars in debt and knew not how they were to finance another building.

But before the end of the week in which the fire occurred the Hon William McMaster wrote to Dr. Fyfe offering $4000.00 towards a new building, providing that the balance of the sum required could be raised. Responses to the appeals that were made came in rapidly and pledges for over [illegible] 000.00 were secured in a few months. The new edifice was completed by midsummer 1862.

The Oxford and Norfolk Gazetteer of 1867 records as follows, "The Canadian Literary Institute has a site on a rising ground commanding splendid natural views. It is a noble structure (reflecting great credit on its architect David White) of three wings or compartments, surmounted by a handsome dome with ample playgrounds. This educational establishment is rendered one of the best scholastic institutions in the Western part of the Province.

The Institute is under the control of the Regular Baptist denomination. It has three different departments viz. Primary, Higher and Theological, the average attendance on which consists of fully 100 students. The fees for attendance in Primary and Higher departments vary from $20.00 to $28.00 per year. In the Theological department, followed by about thirty students, the tuition is gratis.

Besides Dr. Fyfe the teaching staff in 1860 was composed of Miss Brigham, Miss P. S. Vining who taught for six years, Mr. W. Stewart, and Mr. W. D. Hoskinson who stayed until 1867.

For many years there was a constant increase in the number of students attending the Institute and this, with the rapid rise in the general educational status of the Province, made an enlargement of the staff of instruction a necessity. In 1866 the Rev. John Crawford was appointed to the Theological staff. In 1875 J. C. Yule, a former student of the school and an honor graduate from Toronto University, was added also to the Theological department. Prof. Yule only served for two terms before he died. Another son of the Institute Rev. John Torrance was appointed to the vacant professorship. In 1868 Rev. Wm. Stewart retired and was succeeded by James E. Wells as instructor in Classics and Logic. By 1878 the staff had been increased to sixteen.

In 1878 the Institute and the denomination suffered a great loss in the death of Dr. Robert Alexander Fyfe. "He was undoubtedly the greatest organizer and maker of men in Canadian Baptist history" (J. H. Farmer). Following his death, Prof. Wells was appointed head of the Literary department and Rev. John Torrance was put in charge of the Theological department. "Next to Dr. Fyfe probably Prof. Wells exerted the largest influence in shaping the policy of our educational work."

The Institute also had a Lady Principal, the first Lady Principal be-

ing Mrs E. T. Cooke appointed in 1861. She was followed by Mrs. J. E. Wells and other women of recognized ability and scholarship. A Ladies' building was erected in 1878. When Moulton Ladies College was opened in Toronto in 1888, co-education was discontinued at Woodstock.

In 1881 the Theological department was removed to Toronto and became the Toronto Baptist College on Bloor Street, Hon. Wm. McMaster erecting a building for their accommodation at his own expense.

The Primary and High School Work continued at Woodstock under Rev Newton Wolverton. In 1883 the name was changed to Woodstock College.

Toronto Baptist College and Woodstock College were united under one Board to be appointed by the denomination, by a University Charter obtained from the Ontario Legislature at its session of 1887.

In 1888 at the Convention in Guelph it was decided to establish a College, thoroughly equipped for full University work, at Toronto. This was realized through a gift of nearly a million dollars by Senator McMaster and McMaster University was opened in 1890. This Christian University under the control of the Convention of Ontario and Quebec, has been the training school for Baptist leaders, five hundred ministers and missionaries having been trained here for service, while many graduates are leaders in their home churches.

Dr T. H. Rand followed Rev. John Torrance as Principal of Woodstock College and on his retirement Professor J. H. Farmer became Principal. Dr Farmer moving to McMaster University, W. H. Huston was appointed Principal and on his death in 1900 Joseph I. Bates became principal. Following Principals were A. L. McCrimmon, A. T. MacNeill, Dr Thomas Wearing, and Ralph Willcock.

As the educational facilities in the Province became more numerous and young people could receive a good education without leaving home, the attendance at the College decreased. As this decrease became more marked the revenue received was not sufficient to carry on an efficient school and large deficits had to be cared for. Efforts were made to increase the registration. The Educational report of 1925 states that "The school has had a fine history, its traditions have been noble, its achievements notable. The staff is capable and loyal. The equipment is excellent." And a plea was made for a larger number of boys from Baptist homes.

Following much careful consideration on the part of the Senate and Board, Woodstock College was closed as at August 31st 1926.

The hope for a practical plan for re-opening and conducting the school did not materialize.

The buildings were rented for a couple of years and then sold.

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In Oxford County

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Zella M. Hotson

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PREFACE

It has been said that "The ropes of the past ring the bells of the future." I have tried to make a record of Baptist ropes in Oxford County that, as I see it, are ringing the church bells of today.

I have given my main attention to the Baptist Pioneers and to showing the gradual growth of church organizations in the County. I have aimed to make a record of when and by whom each church was organized. More detailed accounts of churches are left for local historians.

I acknowledge with gratitude the generous co-operation I have received from church clerks and others interested in supplying me with the needed material and much more that space does not allow me to use. The principal sources of Baptist information have been the History of Freewill Baptists by Rev. I. D. Stewart, the Autobiography of David Marks (a striking example of the early evangelist), early Association records, the minutes of the first Regular Baptist church in Oxford, the valuable documents held by the First Baptist Church of Woodstock and the minutes of various churches.

ZELLA M. HOTSON

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CHAPTER I.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE COUNTY

The Treaty of Paris by which Canada was formally ceded to the British Crown was signed on the 10th of February, 1763. At this time there was no permanent settlement west of the Ottawa River, the first survey marking off land divisions for the purpose of settlement being at Kingston in 1783. This was followed by other lots along the St. Lawrence and around Niagara, as homesites for the United Empire Loyalists who came in great numbers from the newly independent country called the United States.

In 1791 the Constitutional Act divided Quebec into Upper and Lower Canada, Col. John Graves Simcoe becoming the first Lieut-Governor of the Province of Upper Canada in 1792. Upper Canada was divided into four districts which were now called the Eastern or Johnstown District, the Midland or Kingston District, the Home or Niagara District and the Western or Detroit District and these were again divided into counties in 1792, the nineteen Counties electing the sixteen representatives who formed the first parliament which convened at Niagara on September 17th, 1792.

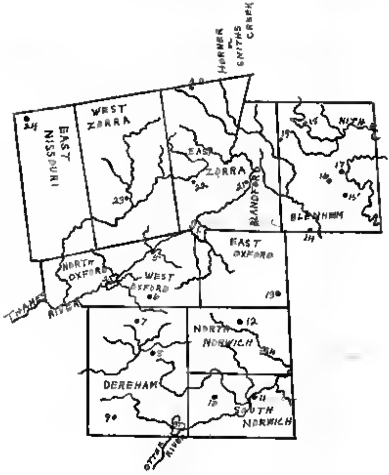
In this first territorial division of land, July 16th, 1792, Norfolk County was one of the Counties organized. Norwich and Dereham townships were included in this County, the description of these townships being "the township of Norwich lies to the east of, and adjoining to, Dereham," and "the township of Dereham lies to the west of and adjoining to Norwich." The first surveying in these townships was done in 1799 and the first land granted in each of these townships was in 1800. Norwich was called after the city of Norwich, the metropolis of Norfolk in England, and Dereham was named after Dereham, an ancient English town in Norfolk, England.

Also by this land division York County in the District of Niagara extended west to the river Thames and included Blenheim and Blandford townships as part of its West Riding. Blenheim was described as "lying to the northward of Dundas Street opposite Burford" and Blandford as "a township the most westerly in the West Riding of York County and lies northward of Dundas Street opposite to Oxford and is washed by the river la Tranche, (Thames). Mr Augustus Jones surveyed a portion of Blenheim and Blandford townships and also of Oxford township in 1793. The township of Blenheim is named after Blenheim, situated in the parish of Woodstock and liberty of Oxford, England, where was situated the beautiful house and park bestowed by national gratitude on the Duke of Marlborough for the victory at Blenheim, Bavaria. Blandford is named from the second title of the Duke of Marlborough "Marquis of Blandford" conferred in 1702 and borne by the heir apparent to the Dukedom. A portion of the south west corner of the township of Blandford was set aside by Governor Simcoe for a town site and was for a long time known as the Town Plot. This is the north western part of the present City of Woodstock (north of Dundas Street and west of Riddell Street). The settlement which gradually established here was called Oxford until about 1830. It was established as the Town of Woodstock in 1833

When Col Simcoe became Lieut.-Governor in 1792 he wrote to Thos. Watson in the United States—who had rendered Col. Simcoe essential service while he was a prisoner of war in the United States—urging him to come to Canada and bring all his relations and friends with him and he would give them a whole township. Mr Watson's son and his cousin Thomas Horner of New Jersey U S A. came in the year 1793 Governor Simcoe had the first three concessions of the township of Blenheim surveyed for their accommodation. Mr Horner and Mr Watson waited while the survey was being completed and selected a site for a mill, then returned to New Jersey Mr Horner came back as far as Newark (Niagara) where he resided for awhile and then moved to Detroit where he remained until that town was given up by the British Government in June 1796 by the provisions of the Jay Treaty of 1794 Mr Horner then proceeded to Albany N Y where he purchased materials and engaged mechanics to erect a saw mill bringing them by boat and roughly made sledges to their destination in Blenheim The mill was in working order by the latter part of 1796 but had not been run at all before the dam broke away From the scarcity of hands it was 1797 before it was rebuilt and the first plank was sawed. This saw-mill—on a site just west of Princeton—was the first in the County of Oxford, Mr Horner also erecting the first grist mill in the County Governor Simcoe's successor would not acknowledge his claims to the township of Blenheim allowing him only that land he was entitled to as a squatter which would be 200 acres.

Governor Simcoe had issued a proclamation which offered inducements to settlers from the United States, offering a township to those who would provide 40 settlers whose families would become permanent residents. The minutes of the Upper Canada Council Chamber Navy Hall, March 23rd, 1793 state that a petition signed Gideon Bostwick Robert Williams Seth Hamlin, Abel Kelsoe and Thomas Ingersoll and numerous associates, prayed for a township, Thomas Ingersoll appearing in behalf of himself and the above named petitioners. The petition was granted giving to Mr Ingersoll and his associates a tract of land of about 64 000 acres Mr Ingersoll for himself and others, was to select the land With the assistance of his friend Brant, the Chief of the Six Nation Indians assisted by a posse of experienced hunters he explored the unoccupied lands west of the Grand River He made choice of that section which now comprises the three Oxford townships, then returned to his native town Great Barrington, Mass., U S A and prepared to establish a settlement. Two years later with his family he returned to Canada but as there was no road west of Ancaster he remained at Queenston After spending two years on the frontier he pushed westward and after great hardships reached the spot he and his Indian friends had selected for his camp a spot now on Thames Street Ingersoll and with his own hands felled a huge basswood that marked the site of his new home. Other members of the little band followed enduring privations unknown to those who succeeded them.

After Governor Simcoe's removal the Government was not so sympathetic towards settlers from the United States and they withdrew the original allotment from Mr Ingersoll and his little band, although efforts were made to induce the Government to keep faith. They were each given a squatter's lot, the dates of patent for these 40 lots running from 1796-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WEST ZORRA
EAST ZORRA
BLANDFORD
NITH R.
BLENHEIM
NORTH OXFORD
WEST OXFORD
EAST OXFORD
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NORTH NORWICH
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1. Woodstock
2. Ingersoll
3. Tillsonburg
4. Norwich
5. Beachville
6. Foldens
7. Salford
8. Mt. Elgin
9. Brownsville
10. Springford
11. Otterville
12. Burgessville
13. East Oxford
14. Gobles
15. Richwood
16. Drumbo
17. Wolverton
18. Plattsville
19. Bright
20. Tavistock
21. Innerkip
22. South Zorra
23. Embro
24. East Nissouri

1806. "These worthy men who introduced civilization into this section left many to perpetuate their names and emulate their virtues."

In 1798 Blenheim, Blandford and Oxford on the Thames, with the townships of Burford, Norwich and Dereham by Act were enacted the County of Oxford, which Act did not come into force until Jan. 1st. 1800. Oxford County was in the Western District.

Oxford County took its name from Oxford City, the Capital of Oxfordshire, an inland County of England having the River Thames for its eastern boundary. Oxford on the Thames (which was later divided, North Oxford withdrawing as a separate organization in 1822 and West Oxford in 1842, the name of the remainder becoming East Oxford) took its name from the same source.

The township of Zorra, later divided into East and West Zorra townships, was surveyed in 1820 and was probably given this Spanish word for a name by the Governor, Sir Peregrine Maitland. It was added to the County by Act of Parliament in 1821.

Nissouri was also surveyed in 1820 and its name is probably Indian, referring to the river, though some think that it is a corruption of "Nigh Zorra" referring to its location. It also was added to the County in 1821 and in 1861 was divided into East and West Nissouri townships, West Nissouri becoming a part of Middlesex County.

The County as constituted by Act in 1851 was composed of Blenheim, Blandford, East and West Zorra, Nissouri, North, West and East Oxford, Dereham and Norwich townships and contains nearly a half million acres of beautifully rolling land. It lies from eight hundred and fifty to ten hundred and fifty feet above sea-level.

*

CHAPTER II

EARLY CONDITIONS

(As given by W. H. Landon in historical sketches belonging to Woodstock Baptist Church. Elder Landon was the first pupil in Oxford to take advanced studies, which he took under L. B. Perry. He was ordained as a Free Communion Elder in 1838 and spent his life serving the Oxford churches. In 1843 he was appointed the first County Superintendent of Education, which office he held for some years.)

With the dawn of settlement and civilization among the dense forests of timber, bark covered shanties made their appearance, built by the use of the axe alone. With not even the sound of another axe within hearing, nor a friend within many miles, these pioneers were men and women of determination and courage. These very early settlers were nearly all U E Loyalists. Old country emigrants had not yet reached this far inland. These first settlers came chiefly from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York and Vermont States and were plain country people, small farmers or the sons of small farmers.

In 1817 the population of the then County had increased to 530 two thirds or three quarters of whom would be in "Oxford on the Thames" township. There were at this time one grist mill and two saw mills but no school no house of worship and no gaol.

In 1822 there were but four school houses one each in West, North and East Oxford and one in Blenheim In the Oxfords the schools were kept open pretty regularly during the winter of each year In Blenheim not so regularly West Oxford was fortunate in having a competent school master named McArthur settle among them, who worked his farm in summer and taught school in the winter and taught it well On this account there was an atmosphere of intelligence in West Oxford in advance of the other townships Later L. B Perry a man of good education, who had taken a course of medical studies, came from New England and settled in this place and for many years taught the winter school.

"The schools few as they were and distant from each other were the only source of literary knowledge to the public. There was no periodical literature—there were no books. There were but three weeklies in the Province and I think not half a dozen copies came to this county There was no book store west of Dundas. With two or three exceptions the private libraries were very small."

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Chapter III.

Religious Organizations

Methodist

In 1794 the first quarterly meeting of the Methodist denomination in the Niagara district was held From here the work spread. Nathan Bangs of Connecticut, U S.A who, it is said was converted at M.E meetings in the Niagara district, became an itinerating Methodist preacher in September 1801 and as early as 1802 travelled westward into Burford and Oxford townships and introduced Methodism among the early settlers.

The people would be gathered together to hear him by some interested settler who would ride over the trails in the forest and notify the scattered pioneers that there would be preaching in his cabin Mr Bangs is reported to have stated at these meetings 'I am a Methodist preacher and my manner of worship is to stand while singing kneel while praying and to stand while preaching to the people who are meanwhile sitting.

These missionary tours resulted in a Methodist Class being held in Blenheim and in Oxford townships.

On August 4th and 5th in 1804 Nathan Bangs attended a quarterly meeting in Oxford which was either organized before or at this time. According to Rev George I Van Loon this was the first definite organization of which records are still kept.

We are indebted to Rev G. I. Van Loon (of the United Church) for the following information also "The war of 1812 gave the work a set back. Most of the missionaries were Americans and the whole movement was looked upon as being pro-American. The result was that for a while Methodist congregations were prohibited from holding property and Methodist ministers were not allowed to conduct the marriage ceremony. Later a chapel was erected by the Methodists in West Oxford township, the deed for the property being dated November 29th, 1822. This deed was registered on February 18th 1824.

In 1832 the work was organised as a circuit under the Rev. John Bailie. The following churches comprised the circuit—Oxford Chapel, Beachville, Ingersoll, 12th Concession Zorra, Woodstock, North Oxford, Embro Road, Aylmer, Mt. Elgin, Dereham and Salford.

In 1842 the circuit became known as the Woodstock circuit and in 1849 this circuit was divided half becoming the Woodstock circuit and the rest the Ingersoll circuit. In 1854 the old church at West Oxford was torn down and the present building was erected and dedicated."

BAPTIST

In July 1808 Peter Teeple, Simon Mabee, Zachariah Burtch, Deborah Sales, Abigail Burtch and Elizabeth Scott of Oxford township, members of different Baptist churches, met at the home of Brother Peter Teeple and heard a sermon by Elder Fairchild of Townsend. These brothers and sisters decided to come under the watch-care of each other.

In September of the same year they formed into a branch of the Baptist church at Townsend and in October 1809 they were organised as a Baptist church.

FRIENDS

During the year 1809 Peter Lossing came from Dutchess County, N.Y. and, liking the land opened up in Oxford County, he returned the fall of the same year with his brother-in-law Peter DeLong and purchased 15,000 acres of Norwich township at fifty cents an acre. They then returned to Dutchess county and sold land to those who would settle in Norwich township and so a settlement was started.

In 1811 the Lossings settled in a comfortable log house and Peter Lossing, being a minister among Friends, established religious services in his house, this being the beginning of Friends' meetings in Oxford.

Later the membership was such as to warrant the establishment in 1818 of a Preparative meeting and in 1819 the Norwich Monthly Meeting was established, comprising all the meetings of Friends in the Province from here westward. This monthly meeting has been held continuously since that time.

The original meeting house was built either in 1820 or 1821 on Quaker Street, Norwich.

PRESBYTERIANS

Rev. Dr. W. T. McMullen in an historical sketch stated that "In 1833 the Rev. George Romanes, an ordained minister from the Presbytery of Glasgow, Scotland, visited Canada and preached in Zorra July 21st and reported on his return home that he had found a log church built in which regular sabbath services were held though they had no minister." A replica in stone of this log church near Embro was unveiled in 1932 to com memorate the commencement of Presbyterian church organization in the County in 1932

Rev G Murray a Presbyterian minister moved into Blenheim near Princeton about 1831 He gave a site on the south west corner of his farm for a church building and contributed liberally to its erection. This organization would probably be commenced soon after the one in Zorra township

Roman Catholic

The 100th anniversary of the founding of the Roman Catholic faith in Oxford County was celebrated in Ingersoll on October 8th 1933

The founding of this faith in 1833 was the result of visits of missionaries to this district.

The first mass to be said in Oxford County was celebrated in James O'Neil's blacksmith shop in the village of Beachville in the spring of 1833 Beachville at that time was larger and of more importance than Ingersoll. Mass was occasionally celebrated here until later when a small church was built.

About 1840 a piece of land was given to Ingersoll by Mr Carnagie (a non-Catholic) upon which to build the first Catholic church in Ingersoll

Anglican

Rear-Admiral Henry Vansittart, deciding to take up land in Canada in the latter part of the year 1832 sent Capt. Andrew Drew, R.N. as his agent to make preliminary arrangements.

Capt. Drew purchased considerable land to the east of what is now Woodstock and wishing to bring the town of the future down his way built a brick church on one of his lots. Funds for the building were contributed largely by Admiral Vansittart and his sister Mrs East and friends in England.

Admiral Vansittart and his family accompanied by Rev Wm. Bettridge, arrived from England on the 21st of June 1834. Mr Bettridge became the first Rector of this little Anglican Church, which he took over late in the fall of 1834. In 1836 it received its Crown endowment, this being the last endowment granted by the Crown to any church in this Country The Church was consecrated by the Bishop of Quebec and named St. Paul's Church in 1838.

The original building is still in use and is considered to be the oldest church building in the County in which Divine Worship is still carried on.

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Chapter IV

Early Baptist Families

As it is our purpose to trace the development of the Baptist cause in this county let us see who were the early Baptist families in this section, many of whom are mentioned in the Pioneer Sketches of Long Point Settlement by E. A Owen.

Peter Fairchild and his family came from New Jersey to Norfolk County and settled near Townsend (now Boston) before the surveyor had arrived in that section. It was several years before they had a neighbor. When the Corliss and Beal families (also Baptists) arrived from New Jersey the three families covenanted with each other as a preliminary step towards the organization of a Baptist Church. This was on October 21st, 1804. Meetings were held alternately at their homes. During the visit of missionaries from the United States, the church was formally organized on November 9th 1805 with thirteen members. On the 21st. of October 1808 Peter Fairchild was ordained and installed as pastor of this church a position he held for fourteen consecutive years.

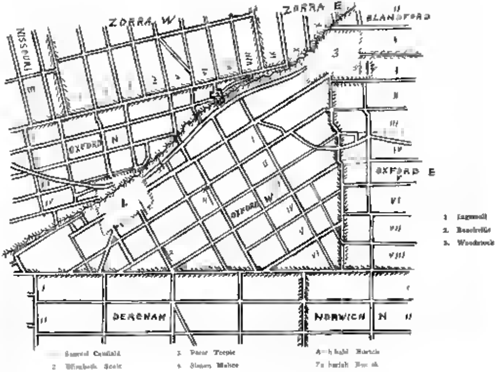
Frederick Mabee was a U E Loyalist who had lived in Massachusetts and fled into New Brunswick, where he settled at St. John. In the fall of 1792 Mr. and Mrs. Mabee and family left St. John for Ontario travelling on horseback and driving twelve cows. They had Indian guides through the forest trails and after wintering in Quebec reached Turkey Point, Norfolk County, some time the next year. Frederick Mabee dying soon after moving to Norfolk County his widow received an U E Loyalist grant of six hundred acres of land.

Peter Teeple was a Lieutenant in the British Army during the War of Independence. He was six feet two inches in height with a fine physique. At the close of the war his company was disbanded at Halifax. He married Lydia Mabee daughter of Frederick Mabee and came to Norfolk County with her parents in 1793. After the township was surveyed he settled near Forestville. On January 1st. 1800 he was made a Justice of the Peace and a Commissioner to administer oaths. These Squires were important persons in these early times. At the first session of the first court held in Norfolk Squire Peter Teeple was one of the sitting Justices.

Titus Finch was also a soldier in the British Army who fought in the War of American Independence and, following the war, was relieved from service at Halifax. He moved into a back settlement in Nova Scotia and while there became ordained as a Baptist minister. Moving to Norfolk County in 1798 he settled on land near Vittoria, Charlotteville township, being given six hundred acres by the Government. He did much missionary work amongst his pioneer neighbors and in 1804 a church was organized. He served this church for over a quarter of a century and made missionary tours to other settlements. On one occasion a small sum of money was raised to send him on a missionary tour up into Oxford. For some years the only salary he received was a black suit of clothes annually. He had five sons and three daughters, several of whom settled in Oxford County. He later became pastor of a church in Oxford.

The Mabees and Peter Teeple became members of this first church in Charlotteville at Vittoria and when a chapel was built in 1807 Peter Teeple became one of the trustees. Soon after this Squire Teeple moved into Oxford and settled on land granted by the Government, being Lot 15 along the river Thames in Oxford township. He became a prominent man in the community. He had three sons and one daughter Susan, who later married Archibald Burtch.

The second son of Frederick Mabee, Simon Mabee, was born in 1770. In 1799 he married Abigail Gustin and for a time owned the land upon which a portion of the old village of Vittoria is built. He later moved to Oxford County and settled on Lot 13 Concession 2 West Oxford. They



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1
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VII
VIII
IX
X
1 Ingersoll
2. Beachville
3. Woodstock
Samuel Canfield
2 Elizabeth Scott
3. Peter Teeple
4. Simon Mabee
Archibald Burtch
Zachariah Burdick

had four sons and eight daughters. The descendants of Frederick Mabee are very numerous in Norfolk and Oxford counties.

Zachariah Burtch and family came from New York State about 1798. They settled in Brantford for a short time before moving westward. After remaining for a few days in the Horner Settlement in Blenheim, they made their way into Oxford township and Zachariah Burtch settled on Lot 16 Concession 1 of East Oxford, where he built the first log house in what is now the City of Woodstock. His son Archibald Burtch settled on Lot 18 beside him. This is just south of Dundas Street in the present city of Woodstock, at the east end of the city, the site being marked by an engraved gate post at the present entrance to Lot 18—now the Salvation Army home for boys.

Samuel and Lucy Canfield and their two sons Abraham and Samuel Jr. were members of the party of forty settlers who were granted the township of Oxford on the Thames by Governor Simcoe in 1793. Samuel Canfield Sr. settled on Lot 18 Concession 1 of West Oxford, his son Samuel Jr. taking Lot 20 Concession 1. Abraham was the first settler in what is now East Oxford. Samuel Canfield Sr. died in 1806 and was buried on his own farm. Abraham Canfield later gave the land for the present cemetery at Oxford Centre.

Elizabeth Scott, who also got her deed with the first registration (Dec. 31st. 1798) settled on Lot 18 Con. 2.

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Chapter V

The First Baptist Organization

"Oxford July 1803. A number of Baptists, members of different churches met at the home of Bro. Peter Teeple and had a sermon by Elder Fairchild and chose Elder Fairchild Moderator and Bro. James Carlis from Townsend clerk, which took a seat with us. Brothers and sisters present, Peter Teeple, Simon Mabee, Zachariah Burtch, Deborah Sales, Abigail Burtch and Elizabeth Scott, which wanted to come under the watch care of each other. Then appeared Abigail Mabee and related her experience and desired to go forward in Baptism, likewise John A. Mabee came under watch care. Voted to hold Covenant on the second Saturday in every month."

So read the minutes of the earliest Baptist organization in Oxford County, recording not only the loyalty of church members, though far from their home church, and their desire for Christian fellowship and counsel, but also recording the first baptism in the county, that of the wife of Simon Mabee.

On September 24th, the same year, a number of Brethren and Sisters of the Baptist Denomination belonging to different churches, some members of no church but having been baptized, met together with Elder Fair-

child and Elder Kendrick to confer on coming together in church relation or upon some other measure most for their mutual benefits and for the good of the cause of Christ in the World It was decided that their numbers were too small to compose a well organized church but after some deliberation they chose rather to be formed into a Branch of the Baptist church of Christ in Townsend (Boston) their number now being nine, Samuel and Lucy Canfield joining with the previous seven. This petition was therefore sent to Townsend signed by these nine people

By the following fall this branch church had apparently prospered and strengthened enough to make a separate organization possible and a Council convened on October 5th 1809 with Elder Titus Finch as Moderator and Samuel Burdick, Clerk, the other members of the Council being Elder Peter Fairchild John Slaght, Joseph Merrill, Samuel Canfield Peter Teeple, Zachariah Burtch and Simon Mabee.

"All consented freely to the Articles of the Baptist order and all consented freely to adopt the Articles of the Charlotteville and Townsend churches and all consented to the Practice and Covenant." The Council withdrew and considered upon the matter and mostly agreed to Constitute the church. Peter Teeple received the Right hand of Fellowship on behalf of the church Brothers James and Elisha Harris came forward and offered themselves to this church and were received. Bro. Zachariah Burtch was chosen Deacon of the church and Bro. James Harris, Clerk.

It may be of interest to note the Articles subscribed to by this first Regular Baptist Church in Oxford County

The Article of the Covenant

We do now in the presence of the Omnipotent God of Elect Angels and men vouch the Lord Jehovah to be our only Lord and Sovereign and give up ourselves to His Service without reservation, taking His Holy Word for the Rule of our Conduct and by the Assistance of Divine Grace promising to observe all Commands and Institutions enjoined on us therein as far as we shall understand them, that we will as far as Divine Providence permits constantly attend the Publick Worship of God and Ordinances of the Gospel in this Church and extend a Faithful watch over all its members. Also in each private relation use our influence to promote Piety and family religion by reading the Scriptures, prayer and Christian Conversation, submitting to the Laws of Christ in the discipline of His House we promise to abstain from and guard against Covetousness, Defraud, Idleness, foolish Jesting reviling and Evil Speaking with whatsoever is unbecoming the Christian Profession, Discarding un-Godliness, Worldly lusts that we will live soberly seeking the advancement of the Kingdom of God in the general Good, humbly trusting in the Righteousness of our Glorious Redeemer for the Holy Spirit to Sanctify and enable us to persevere in Holiness until the Coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to whom be honor and power Everlasting. Amen

The 12 Articles of Faith—(on Scriptures, Creation Fall of Man Plan of Redemption ,etc) include the following—10. We believe that all those who are Chosen by the Father redeemed by the Son and regenerated by the Spirit will finally persevere in faith and holiness unto the end and will be kept by the power of God through faith unto Salvation

The 12 Articles of Practice were as follows

1 Duty to live a life of holiness and unite together to maintain the vis-

ible laws of Christ in the world.

2 Church of professed believers.

3. Baptism an ordinance for professed believers to be performed by immersion and none ought to be received into the visible church till they have been thus baptized.

4. Lord's Supper only for those who have been thus baptized and received into the church.

5. None to administer ordinances except those who have been publickly set apart to preach the Gospel by prayer and laying on of the hands of the presbytery

6. Each individual Church has power and authority from Christ to govern itself.

7 The church to approve those members who have public gifts of prayer, exortation or doctrinal.

8. First day of week is the Lord's Day or Christian Sabbath and duty of all to assemble themselves together on that Day to Worship God by reading preaching and hearing His word together with solemn prayer and thanksgiving and singing of psalms hymns and Spiritual Songs.

9. Duty of Gospel ministers to give themselves up wholly to the work of the ministry and duty of all church members to communicate of their substance and the church ought to be judge of the ability of each member and deal with them in case of their neglect of this as in other cases of Breach of Covenant.

10. Duty to keep the poor who belong to their community and not to cast them on the mercies of the publick, yet not so as to refuse assistance from the publick funds in case of extreme indigency

11 Duty to live in peaceable subordination to Civil Government and Magistrates and to obey every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake and that they have a right to avail themselves of the Benefits of the Civil Laws for their protection and to obtain redress of grievances but that no church member ought in any ordinary case to sue a Brother in the church at the Law but that all controversies respecting temporal interest ought to be settled by a reference to some of the Brethren of the church or judicious neighbors.

12. No person living in adultery or in practice of any known breach of the laws of God or man ought to be received or indulged in the church. The End

Ten men and nine women signed the Articles of the Church.

The first exclusion from this church was two years later for falsehood. During the next ten years there are several records of exclusion—for intoxication for fighting with one of his neighbors on the Lord's day, for accusing another with guilt and refusing to give any proof and he likewise having joined the free masons for lying, for adultery, for refusing to travel with the church, for railing against the church and minister and for joining finity with the world in plays and sham marrying On Aug 14th 1819 Nancy Brish was excluded for leaving the travel* of the church and breach of Covenant and joining the Methodist Class Several of these excluded persons were reinstated.

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*This word is used in nearly all early minute books and appears to refer to the church's journey heavenwards.

The minutes also refer to differences among its members which were brought before the church and there settled by vote of the members. Once the difference was over a handkerchief once a piece of cloth once over a bargain concerning some rope and once a family difficulty was brought before the church. The Brother acknowledged he had boxed his wife's ears after receiving several blows from her with a handspike. The church demanded a publick acknowledgment from both. The Brother refusing was excluded from fellowship and the sister was given one month in which to answer the requirement.

The members of the church also received attention as we read, "Voted that the members living within ten miles of the church's appointments are not to miss more than three Covenant meetings without being inquired after." Also "Voted that in Covenant each member is not to wait the female for the male but all to speak as the spirit moves them."

In July 1812 Simon Mabee was given 'free toleration from the church of Christ in Oxford to improve his gifts wherever the Lord in His providence may call him.' And on October 4th 1817 a Council consisting of Elder John Upfold from Clinton (Beamsville) Church Deacon Samuel Smith from Charlotteville Church and Bro. John Slaght from Townsend Church, convened with the Oxford Church for the purpose of ordaining Simon Mabee to the work of the Gospel.

"After solemn prayer to Almighty God for His blessing and direction in this important business before us we proceeded to business.

1st. Bro. Mabee related the work of God's grace on his soul also his call into the ministry

2ly Asked the candidate a number of questions on Gospel doctrines and proceeded

3ly Called on the Church to know if they were unanimous in calling Brother Mabee to ordination. Deacon Zachariah Burtch answered for the whole in the affirmative

4ly Retired and after mature deliberation on the business before us, we unanimously agreed that it was proper to ordain Bro Mabee but as the Counsel is small we recommend it to the church to postpone the ordination until more help can be obtained."

A few days later Charles Lahatt, a missionary from the Northern Baptist Missionary Society in the State of New York and also from the foreign and domestic missionary society in the City of New York, arriving in the community in his missionary capacity and being informed of the decision of the recent ordination Council, ordained Bro Mabee in the presence of the church and a numerous congregation.

After his ordination Mr. Mabee was pastor of this Oxford church for some years. He did not enjoy the advantages of education but he closely studied the Bible and was a plain faithful and affectionate preacher" (Wm. Rees) "He was well known as a strong and aggressive minister" (Fitch) In the latter period of his life he travelled extensively in Western Ontario, preaching and baptizing. Nearly one thousand people were baptized by him and many churches were established and enlarged. He died at his home in Oxford, January 3rd. 1843. His children all became members of the Baptist Church.

In 1819 the church was divided into three divisions; East the Governor's Road to Deacon Trees, the River Settlement to Deacon Tims and the South Settlement of Oxford to Deacon Kings. Apparently services were held in these different sections, either at houses of members or in school houses. Services are mentioned at the school house near Bro. Tree on the Governor's Road, at the school house near Bro. Harris, at the school house near Brother Jeremiah Finch and at the school house near Bro. Cross.

Darius Cross came from Bennington, N.Y. State, and the minutes give us the following information "April 26th 1820. Voted to send a letter to the Brethren at Bennington, State of New York, respecting a letter for Bro. Cross." In July following "Voted that Bro. Darius Cross shall have liberty to improve his gifts in public where God in His providence may call him." On the 26th of July 1821 a letter was sent to Bennington informing them that "We have retracted the step we took in receiving Mr. Darius Cross as a member of this church. We assure you brethren that we have not done this in consequence of any dissatisfaction in his conduct for we believe him to be a real penitent and his conduct has been such as to gain the esteem of both church and society, but we have done it under the consideration that the step was illegal and had a tendency to disturb the peace of Zion." The church, however almost immediately voted to retrace the steps taken about Bro. Cross and to receive him back if Bennington church would again give him a letter. Apparently he had not come from a Regular Baptist Church.

Besides Darius Cross, Bro. Nicholas French and Bro. James Harris were given, in 1823, the liberty to improve their gifts in public.

In the early twenties this Baptist work was influenced and disrupted by Baptist missionaries from the United States. In order to understand this influence on the Baptist cause in Oxford, of which few records remain, let us go back to the early days in New England and trace the story as we get it from Rev. I. D. Stewart (who wrote a History of Freewill Baptists) and other Baptist historians.

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Chapter VI.

Freewill and Free Communion Baptists.

The early settlers of New England in settling themselves in America regarded it as their right and duty to protect themselves and children from all error and this led to a belief in the necessity of uniformity of public worship, though this prevented religious freedom. It also led to the connection of church and state. This connection resulted in legal suppression of all who differed from the legal church—which was congregational, in compulsory support of churches and ministers, this being collected the same as other taxes, and in worldly and not always converted ministers, who were led into the ministry because of the salary and the great influence a minister had in the community.

Some Baptist churches were started with difficulty. These Baptist churches, called Calvinistic ,as well as the Congregational churches, all believed in predestination and that God ordains whatsoever comes to pass.

There was no salvation for all. The will of man was not free to choose the way of life as nothing could be done until God moved.

In protest to these conditions and doctrines the Free will Baptists came into being as a denomination. They had no desire to form a separate Baptist denomination and for many years their records show simply the name Baptist Church. Their first ministers had all been members of the Baptist denomination and they still claimed to be Baptists but the Calvinistic Baptists refused to fellowship them. The name of Freewill was objected to for many years, "being given these by predestination brethren because they taught that the free grace of God gives power to every sinner to change his will, and conform it to the Gospel." (Marks). They believed not only in free will but also in free salvation and free communion.

Other groups of Baptists were formed also during these times as the Free Baptists, the Free Communion Baptists and the Open Communion Baptists. These were all somewhat similar to the Freewill Baptists, being protests against prevailing doctrines.

The first Freewill church was organized in 1780 at New Durham, New Hampshire with Benjamin Randall as Pastor. By the close of the year there were five free churches. The polity of these Baptists was gradually developed as their increasing numbers and changing circumstances required. After three and one half years, the early churches united in a Quarterly meeting and received the counsel, co-operation and support of each other. After eight and one half years more, owing to the increasing number of churches Quarterly meetings were established in different localities and to these the local churches reported. A Yearly Meeting which held an annual session in four different places, received reports from these Quarterly Meetings. Some years later a General Conference was established, composed of delegates from the (now) seven Yearly Meetings. The first General Conference convened in October 1827.

Nearly all the ministers toured as evangelists, living on donations received as they went along. As they travelled through the sparsely settled Eastern States, small groups would be converted and be organized as a church. Sometimes a group would be found holding similar beliefs to the Freewills and it would be invited to join with them.

In this way missionary Elders from Vermont State came over into Lower Canada and organized churches at Hatley and at Stanstead in 1802. Rev. Asa McGray, who came from Maine State, started the Barrington church in Nova Scotia in 1816 or 17. Missionaries from Maine also started work in New Brunswick, a church being organized at Hodgdon in 1820.

In Upper Canada a man named Andrew Banghart of Westminster Tp. in Middlesex County becoming converted began to exhort his neighbors until 48 or 50 had joined with him. Some of these had heard of Christians in New York State with beliefs similar to theirs and Banghart was sent to get in touch with them. He was unsuccessful but he was sent a second time and found Freewill Baptists who baptized him and ordained him before he returned. Soon afterwards, Eld. Herman Jenkins, a Freewill minister came over to this district to visit these Baptists. He found a church of twenty members in Westminster and another one in Dunwich Tp. Elgin Co.

Several years before this Thomas Huckins with two or three families of Free will Baptists removed from New Hampshire and Lower Canada into this section of Dunwich. For some years they enjoyed religious privileges with other denominations but not finding with them the liberty which they wished to enjoy about eight persons for several months had held separate conference meetings and were called Freewill Baptists.

These two churches joined with a New York State Quarterly Meeting in 1821. Thomas Huckins commenced preaching and afterwards moving to London, a church was organized there and also joined the Quarterly Meeting in 1827. Thomas Huckins was ordained at London in June 1826, the first Freewill Baptist ordination in Upper Canada.

ELDER DAVID MARKS

Freewill Baptists called their ministers Elders (Page 61 Treatise on the Faith of Freewill Baptists, 1846 edition) and they performed the duties of pastors, teachers and evangelists. However J.R. Stewart uses both the prefix Eld (page 52 Eld. Daniel Hibbard) and Rev (page 65 Rev Daniel Hibbard—1782) Men were given a license to preach by a local church and, if acceptable, were ordained later by a council. Sometimes Ruling Elders, as well as Deacons, were appointed in local churches. Often these were ordained to the ministry if the need arose for more ministers. (Stewart's History pages 55 and 45) This appears to be an early custom.

Free Communion Baptists also called their ministers Elders.

A great evangelist for these times was born on Nov 4th 1805 at Shendaken, Ulster Co New York State and named David Marks. The family moved to Junius N.Y. where he spent his boyhood. His parents were both members of a Calvinistic Baptist Church. Often his mother took him to her room and told him that she had consecrated him to God and was assured that he would be converted early and would plead with him to give his heart at once to the Saviour. He says in his diary "At the age of four years a sense of death and judgment filled me with awful feelings. At the age of nine I was generally careless of eternal things yet frequently I would resolve never more to engage in vile sports. When nearly eleven years old his life was much endangered by a fall from a horse which so affected him that he made oath unto God that he would like Daniel kneel and pray thrice in a day the rest of his life, even though he might not be 'elected' for salvation.

Eighteen months after this he first spoke in a Conference meeting of the Calvinistic Baptist church where his parents were members. A few weeks later he asked to be baptized and though accepted for baptism he was not baptized even though he renewed his request twice afterwards. Six months later he again requested baptism and the subject was this time discussed and his views concerning election and communion were asked for. He told them he was in doubt whether their views were agreeable to the scriptures and they voted not to receive him. He was then aged 13 and all this was a trial to his Christian faith. But his oath to God was diligently kept and his faith and trust were strengthened. He attended meetings of different denominations, particularly the Methodists. Then in July 1819 some Freewill Baptists having heard about him came thirty miles to see him and he, finding that their views were the same as his, was baptized and joined their church.

When 15 years old he felt God was calling him to preach the Gospel and warn the wicked of their danger and in April 1821 aged 15, he definitely left home to labor in the Lord's vineyard, and walking from place to place he spoke wherever he stopped often at Methodist gatherings or Free Communion conferences as well as on the street and at Freewill gatherings.

His parents being poor he had only received a meagre education but twice he refused offers of financial help towards an education as he believed his life would be short and it would take time from his duty of declaring the glad tidings of salvation. However he studied with considerable success as he travelled around. Often large crowds came out to hear the boy' preach and from preaching in the open air he developed great strength of voice. His diary says he often spoke six hours in a day and seldom became weary in the effort.

He was usually given free board and lodging wherever he stopped and maybe received 50 cents or a dollar from some interested listener. He was often tired and hungry and cold but his needs were always met and he gained in influence as a preacher and later as a leader in the denomination. As the continual walking from town to town took up so much time he was sometimes loaned a horse and was later assisted in procuring a horse and waggon. The waggon often served as a pulpit for his open air addresses and the horse in a little over five years carried him 19 thousand miles.

David Marks in his travels crossed the Niagara into Canada for the first time in the fall of 1822, spending a few days in the Niagara district. In Oct. 1827 he made his first trip to London district to visit the three Freewill Baptist churches. He crossed at Lewiston and came by way of Hamilton Ancaster Brantford Oxford and London. He was accompanied by Freeborn W. Straight of Ontario, New York State. After six weeks Mr Marks returned to the United States but made several return journeys all over the same route. In Sept. 1828 he married Marilla Turner the eldest daughter of Captain Daniel Turner who had moved to Zorra Oxford County from Vermont State. Mrs Marks was well educated and accompanied her husband on his journeys.

Mr Straight remained in Elgin County for some months going over to New York State to be ordained and again returning to Elgin County. He married a girl from Dunwich Tp. Elgin.

Elder Jenkins who had been the first Freewill minister to visit the London District, also made several return visits.

These ministers addressed gatherings in Oxford County whenever in the neighborhood. Dr Perry whose house is the oldest still standing in Woodstock and is occupied by descendants of Dr Perry had a room called the minister's bedroom which was a sacred place. Many missionaries and ministers of all denominations stayed here welcome guests while in the community. The family have in their possession reminiscences of some of these men. Elder Jenkins always carried a stocking in which he placed donations received as he travelled around. The stocking was never hidden as he felt there was no necessity for that. Elder Marks is called a very very dignified and sober man who would have been shocked at a funny story. Dr Perry named a son and a daughter after David Marks and his wife Marilla.

However I think Mr Marks had a sense of humour. On one of his tours through Upper Canada he arrived at Ancaster a little before sunset and "wishing to warn the wicked of this village and having but a few minutes to stop, I gave notice for preaching in seven minutes on the green opposite the meeting house. When the time had expired two persons were present and I asked them to give me a text. They gave me "Nothing". Soon after prayer 70 or 80 people assembled and taking my text I proceeded to show first that God created the world out of *nothing* secondly that man was placed under a law in which there was *nothing* unjust thirdly that there is *nothing* to justify the impenitent transgressor fourthly that there will be *nothing* to comfort him in death—*nothing* to save him in judgment or to give him hope in hell; fifthly that the righteous have by nature *nothing* meritorious, *nothing* of their own of which they can boast, *nothing* to fear in death; and that in the judgment day they will have *nothing* to cause them grief and in heaven *nothing* to disturb their peace and finally that in time and in eternity *nothing* will turn to the advantage of the wicked or to the disadvantage of the righteous." On returning to Ancaster about three weeks later he preached to about 100 people on "Something."

Elder Thomas Tallman

In the fall of 1821 Elder Thomas Tallman of New York State came into Oxford and settled his son on land in Zorra. It became known that he was a minister and he was pressed to preach. He was gifted with great natural eloquence and had an earnest and fervid manner when speaking and was affable and genial to meet. Upon once consenting to preach it was impossible for him to withdraw. Whole settlements came out to hear and half his hearers would follow him to the next settlement to hear him again." Elder Tallman was pastor of the First Free Communion Baptist church of Worchester, Sharon and Cobuskill, State of New York.

Elder David Marks, who as an evangelist often spoke to Free Communion gatherings, makes the following record in his journal, "In the early part of January 1827 I held meetings with several churches of the Free Communion Baptists. This denomination is distinct from the Freewill Baptists. The principal difference is that many of the Free Communion Baptists believe in what is called 'the final perseverance of the saints'. It is thought, however that more than one half of the denomination exactly agree with the Freewill Baptists. Another difference is they have a small number of Articles' abstract from the scriptures. Their churches are situated mostly in New York and principally within one hundred miles west of Albany. Their exact number I cannot state, but probably they had in 1827 about forty churches and three thousand members. Not far from this time their annual conference was divided into two called the Northern and Southern conferences. The great western turnpike is the dividing line between them. I am of the opinion that if the Free Communion Baptists and the Freewill Baptists should become acquainted with each other they might become one people."

At the time that Elder Tallman came into Oxford there were only three church organizations in the County. The Methodists had their organization in West Oxford township, the Friends had their settlement and regular services around Norwich and the Regular Baptists had their organization in Oxford township. It is stated that Elder Tallman would have been willing to work with Elder Mabee of the Regular Baptist Church and so strengthen the cause that then existed but Elder Mabee, not agreeing with all of Elder Tallman's religious views, thought it his duty to denounce him and to warn the people against him.

Elder Tallman returned to his home in New York State before winter and returned in the spring "duly authorized to constitute and organize churches wherever God in His Providence might lead him." The *First Free Communion Baptist church* in the Town of Oxford (now the City of Woodstock) was organized on April 22nd, 1822 at the log school house on the corner of what is now Dundas and Chapel Streets. Nineteen of the twenty-one charter members had been members of the Regular Baptist

church and yet others transferred later. It is interesting to notice some of these.

Eli Harris and his family of eight sons and three daughters moved into Oxford township where Eli Harris died in 1813. His sons James and Elisha and afterwards others of his family joined the Regular Baptist church in Oxford township where James became clerk and was made a lay preacher. Two months after the Free Communion church was organised we find that James Harris preached for them and was then received into their fellowship and granted a license to improve his gifts June 1822. On the 31st of the following October we find that "a council was held at the house of David Curtis (who had also transferred from the Regular Baptist church) for the purpose of ordaining Darius Cross and James Harris." Six sons of Eli Harris became ministers though not all of them in the Baptist Denomination.

Darius Cross left the Regular Baptist church of Oxford township to become a charter member of the Free Communion church and after his ordination in the fall he, with Elder Harris, Elder Jacob Goble and Elder Tallman, were the early Free Communion preachers and organizers in the County.

Zachariah Burtch apparently always remained a member of the Oxford township Regular Baptist church. His youngest daughter Esther married Dr. L. E. Perry and they were prominent workers in the Free Communion church for many years. It was their home which was such a welcome stopping place for all touring evangelists.

Archibald Burtch, son of Zachariah Burtch, married Squire Teeple's daughter who died in 1824 leaving him with five small children. His second wife was Miss Jane Blow. Jane Blow with her family had come from Philadelphia in Oct. 1820 travelling by team and covered waggon. They arrived in Oxford with just seven dollars left but traded one horse for three cows. They lived the first winter in a little building 12 feet square on the Burtch farm. Jane Blow worked for Mrs. Burtch and received in pay two lbs. of maple sugar for each day's work. Afterwards she worked for Luddingtons and took her pay in home-made flannel and linen cloth. She was baptized by Elder Cross and joined the church in Blenheim a branch of the Woodstock church. Archibald Burtch was baptized in 1824 and joined the Woodstock church. He was a few months later appointed a deacon of this church. Few people were more influential in the early Woodstock church than Deacon Burtch and his wife. He donated the land on which the college was built and when it was in difficulties, he mortgaged his farm to assist in building it. Church meetings were often held at their home or large gatherings in their barn.

We get this description of early church meetings of the Free Communion Baptists from W. H. Landon. "This Free Communion church set aside one day in every month to acknowledge their covenant. For a period of six years these monthly week day meetings were held more or less regularly and failure to confess orally to the covenant and Articles of faith at these meetings resulted in exclusion from the church. A member might be absent on the sabbath without exciting remarks, but if one absented himself from the Saturday covenant meeting he must have a good excuse or he would fall under censure. The covenant meeting was conducted as follows: The minister if present, or otherwise the senior deacon, conducted the devotional exercises, after which the church clerk read the Articles of

Faith and all who acknowledged the Articles were required to manifest it by rising. The Articles of Covenant were then read and all were required to speak to their Covenant. Not much secular business was transacted at these sacred meetings. The manner of conducting public worship differed much from the present practice. The introductory services consisted of a hymn, a prayer and a second hymn by the minister. Elder Tallman, I think, read the scriptures but Elder Harris and Elder Cross seldom or never. Then followed the sermon, after which the brethren and sisters had liberty to improve their gifts as it was called, and this was regarded not only as a right but as an imperative duty, and it was not unusual for every church member present to rise and address the audience under a conscientious sense of duty. The privilege and duty were considered so sacred by the masses, that he would have been a bold man who would venture to propose even a modification of it. The people had to be taught cautiously that the Spirit had not conferred the same gifts upon all men and all women and it took years for the church to comprehend this truth. These customs and usages to which I have alluded were by no means peculiar to this church, but were common to all other churches in the country and in the neighboring states at least in rural districts, including the Methodist as well as the several sections of the Baptist Denomination."

This church in the Town of Oxford was called the Oxford Church.

EXPANSION

Not only were meetings held in the Oxford Church but, in order to preach the Gospel to all whom they could reach, visits were made into different sections of the County, wherever it was possible to get a few persons together, and Branch churches were started.

The first of these was in Blenheim Township at the house of Joseph Smith near Horner's Creek, eight being baptized and a church of thirteen members being organized on October 13th 1822. Jacob Goble was elected Deacon and Bro. Slaughson, Clerk.

During the year 1823 Elders Tallman, Cross and Harris made frequent visits to the south Norwich settlement and in February 1824 the brethren there asked to be set apart as a Branch. At the June Conference of the Free Communion Baptist Association of Upper Canada, which was held at Deacon Archibald Burtch's in East Oxford the following June, they presented a petition asking to be set apart as a church. This petition was granted and the hand of fellowship given by Moderator Elder Goble. Some of the early members here were Hosea Heath, Oren Wright, Martin Hicks Jr., Asapel Oatman and Christopher G. Otis, all in South Norwich in the vicinity of Springford.

A branch of the Oxford Church was organized across the river in Zorra in June 1825, Alpheus Taft being elected Deacon and Darius Cross clerk. Meetings were held here at the Taft school house. E. Cody and wife M. Cody and E. McQuain were baptized in this district.

Another branch of the Oxford Church was formed in the Rowell settlement in Zorra on Dec. 3rd, 1830. The early members here include Stratten Rowell and his wife, who had been baptized in 1826, and Joseph and Keziah Brown, Nelson and Anna Brown and Charles Flowers, all of whom had been baptized in 1829. Stratten Rowell built a neat frame chapel on his property on the 16th Line of East Zorra, chiefly at his own expense and services were held here every two weeks or once a month according to circumstances. Covenant meetings were held monthly On Sundays following the Covenant meetings, the Lord's supper was observed and Mr and Mrs Rowell entertained all who had come long distances through the woods.

At first the membership of these Branch churches in Zorra were included in the Oxford church. Then in the early thirties about thirty five members were dismissed to the 1st, and 2nd. Zorra churches.

The Brethren at Harris Street made a request to the Oxford church on the 10th of December 1831 to be set off as a separate cause to be called "The Second Branch of Oxford Church"

A church organized in Southwold township, Elgin County joined with the others in forming an Association, to which they sent delegates. At other points—in Westminster and Lobo townships in Middlesex County and Dunwich and Malahide townships in Elgin County—those converted became members of the Oxford Church and these little colonies were visited once every few months. Only in the most favored localities was there preaching as often as every other Sabbath "It was very difficult, owing to this scattered state, to maintain these minor institutions." Landon.

As we have stated an Association of these Free Communion churches was formed immediately following the organizing of the separate churches At the Association in 1825 four churches reported as follows Blenheim 37 members, Southwold 15 Oxford 78 and Norwich 15 a total of 146

In 1828 W. H. Landon was ordained an Elder and in June 1832 Brother Wolverton was ordained after the Annual Conference and these afterwards gave much of their time and talent to preaching These early ministers received no definite salary each having his own occupation as well as preaching

EFFORTS TOWARDS UNION OF FREE WILL AND FREE COMMUNION CHURCHES.

When Elder Marks made his first journey through Oxford in 1827 he consented to preach and went to the house of Elder James Harris where he addressed a meeting in the evening and the next day held two meetings On the Sabbath he preached three sermons in Blenheim.

In 1829 an effort was made to effect a union of the Free Communion and the Free Will Baptist Churches in Upper Canada, There were at this time in Western Ontario three Freewill and four Free Communion churches far removed from others of kindred faith. Elders Marks and Straight attended the Eighth Annual Free Communion Baptist Conference of Upper Canada which was held at the house of Deacon Burtch, being appointed to labour to effect a union. It was agreed to refer the proposed union to the churches who should send delegates with instructions to a conference, which should meet at Oxford two weeks later The conference met according to appointment and was composed of Marks Straight, Buckion and five laymen on the one side and Harris Smith, Goble, and eleven laymen on the other "After a full discussion it was decided First, that we find only one difference in theory between the two denominations namely whereas the Freewill Baptist maintain that a saint, in this state of probation, may lose that grace and that character which constitute him such, and thus finally perish the Free Communion Baptists generally maintain the reverse Secondly we find but one difference in practice, namely that the Free Communion Baptists have a few "written Articles of faith" ab stract from the scriptures, while the Freewill Baptists acknowledge no standard but the Bible. Thirdly agreed that we do not think these differences to be of sufficient importance to warrant propriety in our maintaining separate visibility. Fourthly agreed that we hold a friendly correspondence with each other baptize, break bread and ordain with each other as occasion may require, also that we assist each other in church labors etc with the same freedom, as though we were but one denomination. These Resolves were presented to the Free Will Yearly Meeting in New York State and approved. Elder James Harris of the Free Communion church at Woodstock being present.

These advances seem to have been initiated by Elder Marks and the Freewill Baptists. However at the Free Communion Baptist General Conference at Ames, Montgomery County, New York State, on September 8th, 1841 composed of 58 churches, 32 churches reported in favor of union with the Free Will churches, 13 were opposed and 13 made no report. Three delegates were appointed to the Free Will General Conference, who were instructed to present a request for the admission of their churches to membership with that body. This was presented to the General Conference on October 6th 1841 and it was granted unanimously. Their churches were mostly in the vicinity of Utica, their membership being about 2500.

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CHAPTER VII

REGULAR BAPTIST EXPANSION

Now let us return to the Regular Baptist Church organization in Oxford township. What a catastrophe it must have seemed to lose nineteen members all at one time with more following as the months went by. We read of members being excluded for embracing as we conceive erroneous principles and of others laboured with to no purpose and finally excluded for joining the Free Communion church. One member gave as her reason for leaving the church that the church held to close communion and unconditioned election.

But the church continued to take in members. These members were in widely scattered districts, coming from all of the townships of South Oxford and from Zorra and Nissouri townships in North Oxford.

The church called a Council in January 1828 to ordain Nicholas French. The Council examined him on January 25th and ordained him on January 28th. The seventeen members of the Council who came from outside points include the following Elders—Charlotteville—Elder Finch, Bayham Elder Jas Merrill, Westminster Elder Slate (Slaght?) Southwold, Elder Reuben Crandall. Elder Crandall was chosen Moderator.

Three times in 1828 delegates from this church were appointed to attend ordination Councils—June at Southwold to ordain Wm. McDermand, July at Aldborough to ordain Dugal Campbell and in Sept. at Townsend to ordain John Harris.

Groups in the various settlements now commenced to consider separate organizations.

David Churchill and family had moved into South Zorra and joined with the Oxford Church. Mary and Benjamin Vandecar from the same community were baptized in 1825. Meetings were held in this section at the home of Deacon Fitch and on the 4th of March 1828 a Council met and after deliberation agreed to set off the Brethren in Zorra as a church in sister relation. Elder Mabee gave the right hand of Fellowship and Elder French gave the charge to the church. The church chose David Churchill as Deacon and Joseph Fitch as Clerk and consisted of eleven men and six women. This church carried on for some time and then lapsed, being reorganised again and joining the Grand River Assn in 1849 with a membership of 23. Winchell Vandecar was Clerk from 1851 to 1861 when the church ceased reporting and apparently discontinued. Pastors who served here besides Elder Simon Mabee and Elder Nicholas French were Elder Titus Finch (1831) and Elder Isaac Elliott (1843).

Jared and Salmon Vining, sons of Rev. Ebenezer Vining whose labours were mostly in Massachusetts and New York States, came to Canada in 1822 and settled in Nissouri. An autobiography of Rev. T. B. Brown an old local Methodist preacher and pioneer of East Nissouri gives us the following information. "A few years after the Vinings settled in Nissouri, two missionaries, Elders Mabee and French, were sent to labour in Nissouri by the Christian ladies of the Baptist church in Oxford who, having no money, paid them with coats, socks and other home made clothing. The labours of these missionaries were not in vain for the Word was blessed and many were awakened and converted and among them the Vinings. A Baptist Church was formed in the Vining neighborhood and these brothers were leading spirits in it. The elder brother Jared became the Deacon and Salmon became the minister." The records of the First Baptist Church show that on June 17th 1827 Jared Vining told the travel of his mind and was baptized and later in the summer Salmon, Charlotte and Mariah Vining were also baptized. A Council from the Charlotteville, Townsend and Zorra churches met with the 1st Oxford Church on the 4th Friday in May 1828 for the purpose of organizing a church in Nissouri. We have no record here of the ordination of Salmon Vining, which according to their family records took place in a new barn on his own farm. "Dissentions among leading brethren led to the downfall of this first organization" which was reorganized in 1858 as the West Nissouri Baptist Church, which is now in the Middlesex Association.

At a meeting in Norwich township on May 17th 1821 Jonathan Emeigh and Hiram Sprague told their experiences, were baptized and received the right hand of Fellowship into the First Oxford Church. Sarah Sprague later became a member also.

In December 1828 the Norwich township brethren voted against forming a separate organization and requested that they might remain in the old church organization. Jonathan Emeigh was appointed a Deacon.

On March 25th 1837 a Council including Elders John Harris from 1st. Townsend, Simon Mabee from 1st Oxford and J. Woodward from 1st Norwich organized the Second Church in Norwich with nineteen charter members. In January 1848 it was decided to erect a meeting house and, apparently three families, members of the church, gave land on which to build a Chapel as three rows of lots in the adjoining cemetery were re-served for the exclusive use of the families of Emeigh, Dennis and Snyder. The first building erected bears the date 1840 and is now used as a shed on the old Snyder farm. The present building was built in 1870 and dedicated in January 1871, Dr. Fyfe of Woodstock being the special speaker. The first pastor of the church was Elder Isaac Elliott who came from Ingersoll on horseback once a month and served the church for a year for 50 bushels of wheat. About 1887 the name of the church was changed to *Burgessville* Baptist Church.

In 1856 Rev. Wm. Haviland the pastor of Burgessville held evangelistic
4 meetings in the town hall at *Otterville*. Following the special meetings a church was organized with Rev. Wm. Haviland as pastor, Stephen Delong and Silas Slaght as Deacons and Edmond Titus as Clerk. This church was received into the association in 1856. In the year 1865 a site was procured and a church building erected. At that time the cause at Otterville was maintained in connection with the Springford Church and remained with it until 1874 when the church was reorganized, eighteen members from Springford casting with the newly organized church at Otterville. About the year 1882 services were suspended for a time owing to being unable to support a pastor alone. In 1883 the Mt. Elgin church, then working with Springford, united with Salford, and Otterville and Springford united as a field. The church prospered and the church building was veneered with red brick, a basement was put in and it was otherwise improved.

During the Convention Controversy of 1928 the membership of this church divided. That section which joined the Union of Regular Baptists, augmented by a number from the Springford church, gained possession of the Church Building.

The Sprague Settlement being named after the first settler Hiram Sprague was on the east side of East Oxford township. Hiram Sprague built a large house about the centre of his large farm and they were noted for their hospitality, being ever the friends of new settlers arriving in the district. Mr. Sprague used to walk through the bush to attend church services of the West Oxford Church. When the Second Norwich (Burgessville) church was organized he became a member there. As the district became more settled church services were often held at a school house near his farm. Later he gave an acre of ground on the north west corner of his property, Con. 8 East Oxford, for a chapel, other settlers furnishing timber and other material and all helping with the work. On July 11th 1859 a Council convened and formed a Branch of the Burgessville church here with Hiram E. Sprague as Deacon. This remained a Branch church until May 2nd 1862 when it became recognized as an independent church to be known as the *East Oxford* Baptist Church. It was received into the Association this year. There were 59 charter members. Elder H. Haviland, who was the pastor of the Burgessville church, became the first pastor of the East Oxford church. The church continued to co-operate with Burgessville until May 3rd 1867 when it united with Creditville church. This union was terminated after six years, the church re-uniting with Burgessville with which church they still co-operate.

A pastor of the Burgessville and East Oxford churches, Rev. H. Woodward, was instrumental in organizing a church in the village of *Norwich* and resigned his pastorate to become the first pastor of the Norwich church. Norwich church was organized with sixteen members, living in the town and vicinity, on June 14th 1864. The two bodies of

Methodists in Norwich having united leaving one church vacant, the Baptist people bought this building and have continued to worship in it A recognition Council of the Association was held in the church on November 9th 1884.

During the pastorate of Rev W L. Newton (1828 1831) Norwich dismissed sixteen members to form a Baptist church at *Hatchley* They afterwards built a small church there and for a considerable number of years carried on the Norwich pastor preaching there each Sunday afternoon They ceased to function some years since.

On the 22nd of November 1828 the First Oxford church called a Council from Westminster Charlotteville, Southwold, Zorra, Nissouri and Townsend and organized a new church called the *Second Church in Oxford* This apparently was the Harris Street church a few miles south of Ingersoll. A Chapel was built here and church services carried on for some years. There was a cemetery on the property The bodies of Eli Harris and others who had been buried on his farm were removed to this cemetery

The Harris family and others had divided on religious beliefs some remaining with the First Oxford township church and some joining the First Free Communion Baptist Church of Oxford at Woodstock We have noted that on the 10th of December 1831 "the Brethren at Harris Street made a request to the Oxford Church (Woodstock) to be set off as a separate cause to be called "The Second Branch of Oxford Church" This organization evidently met in the Harris Street Chapel also, as it is reported by descendants of these pioneers that one organization would padlock the door of the Chapel against the use of the other organization when feeling was high.

The records of the Second Church in Oxford have disappeared, but we find in the minutes of the First Oxford Church that Nicholas French was pastor there in 1834 This church requested admission into the Association in 1843 but their case was laid over and in 1845 the Association resolved not to receive them. Before this time the Free Communion Association in Oxford had lapsed and the members were joining elsewhere Some of the members of the Free Communion Branch Church at Harris Street may have joined with the Regular Baptist Church there and this may have been the reason for the cautiousness of the Association. However they are reported in 1850, and in 1851 they reported a membership of 37 Josiah W Elliott being Clerk and Elder Freeman pastor Elder Wm Freeman was also pastor of the 1st Oxford Church. In 1857 the report of the committee, appointed by the Association the previous year to visit the Second Regular Baptist Church in Oxford, was received It was moved and carried that this church be dropped from the minutes of the Association and that the committee who have reported, advise the members to unite with some other church. During 1857 at least fourteen members of the late Second Oxford Church were received into the First Oxford Church membership, the First Oxford Church holding meetings in the Harris Street Chapel as well as in their own Chapel

Four years after the organizing of this Second Church in Oxford, eighteen of its members became the Charter members of the First Regular Baptist Church of Christ in Norwich which was organized at the "old block school house" on Mr Kellett's farm just a little west of the village of Springford in 1832 The Council which set them apart as a church was composed of Elders and members from the First Oxford, Second Oxford

Zorra, Nissouri and Blenheim churches. Elder Nicholas French was the first pastor here from 1832-37. For the first ten years after organization their meetings were held in the school house, their own Chapel in *Springford* being opened in 1842. In 1853 a more commodious house of worship was built and about thirty years later the present church edifice was erected. Dr. Castle of Toronto was the preacher at the dedicatory services. A parsonage was purchased in 1881.

The First Oxford Church, the mother of these numerous churches in South Oxford, also prospered. Elder Mabee was the pastor for some years. In 1829 a committee was appointed to take up subscriptions to pay Elder Mabee for his labours in the Gospel. Elder Titus Finch was pastor in 1829. In April 1829 "employed Elder Mabee to serve as pastor for one year from this date for which he is to receive forty dollars payable in grain, wheat, rye or corn at the going price in Oxford at the expiration of the time. The grain is to be delivered at Jeremiah Finches. Elder Mabee is to hold regular meetings within the limits of the church and not be absent unless leaving someone to fulfill his appointments." Two months later "Voted that Elder Finch take half of the time and prospects with Elder Mabee." In 1831 Simon Mabee was chosen pastor of the First Oxford Church and Elder Titus Finch as pastor of the Zorra church. At this time there were over sixty members of the Oxford church. Later in the year it was voted that each male member shall pay for the expense of the church, one shilling each year on the first day of January. In 1839 employed Elder Isaac Elliott for one year as pastor who was to be paid once a month for visiting them. There were many baptized and joined the church in 1833 in 1835 and during 1841 forty two were received.

In February 1841 Elder Mabee offered to give the church one and one half acres of land on the ridge near the four corners (Pipers' Corners) on Lot No. 13 in the 2nd Concession of Oxford West, on the North-east corner of said Lot, for a meeting house and burying ground. The church accepted the land and agreed unanimously to build on it and appointed Elder Mabee to be their agent to solicit donations and subscriptions to the building fund. One would gather that the reason no building had been erected before this was because of the scattered membership, who came from eight different townships. In the early years of the organization it would be more satisfactory to meet in school houses or homes in the different localities, but when the townships were able to organize churches it was more satisfactory to the membership in West Oxford to have their own building. Elder Mabee did not long enjoy this church home as he died in January 1843.

Later pastors of this West Oxford Church were: 1844 Elder Fred Howay, 1845 Elder Eastwood, 1851 Elder Wm. Freeman, 1858 Elder George Wilson. Elder Wilson was employed at a salary of $600.00.

In September 1859 Elder George Wilson visited some friends at Mt. Elgin and sent around word that he would preach in the brick school house one mile south of Mt. Elgin for two evenings. Such interest was shown that he continued to preach week day evenings for about two months. During this time about 45 were baptized and joined with the First Oxford Church forming a branch of that church. At a meeting in September 1861 in Mr. Miles' shop arrangements were begun to organize the *Mt. Elgin* branch as a separate church. Mr. Wilson still being the pastor. After being dismissed by the First Oxford Church they met November

11th 1861 and organized as the Mt. Elgin Baptist Church with a membership of fifty They were received into the Grand River South Association in 1862. Rev I. Elliott was pastor here in 1864 and Rev J. Terrance in 1865.

Many were baptized also in the *Beachville* district by Elder George Wilson and in 1861 the members in this locality organized as a Branch of the West Oxford Church with Elder Wilson as pastor A frame church was built in 1861 and bricked in later In September 1866 a Council was called to recognize them as an independent church. They were received into the Association in 1867

"On the 30th of July 1861, the Providence of God seemed to have directed Rev George Wilson to East Nissouri, where he preached by invitation. The Word was blessed, many were hopefully converted and a considerable number baptized on a profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus." These are the minutes which open the records of the *East Nissouri* Baptist Church.

A Council was called to recognize the church of nearly forty members as a Regular Baptist Church. Rev George Wilson would not be able to give a great deal of time to this new church and the minutes of July 7th 1862 record "That as Elder Vining had kindly offered to come and preach occasionally that we invite him forthwith." Rev S. Jones of the Mission Church at St. Marys took charge of this field also the beginning of 1863. In October 1864 Elder James Lince, formerly a minister of the Free Will Baptist Church in Zorra was received as a member of the church and did some preaching.

In a little book called "Incidents in the Life of S.B. Mitchell St. Marys" written by himself, he writes "As I was returning from the Ingersoll market in the year 1872, when five miles from St. Marys, in the township of Nissouri, I passed a Baptist meeting house A Baptist church had been organized in the neighborhood about twelve years previous, but the members had become cold and dead spiritually The house was locked up. It stood on posts and as there was no fence surrounding it, a large flock of sheep had taken possession of the basement. As I rode on I felt sad and said in my heart "O Lord these sheep seem to be wiser than thy people" The result was that he organized a Sunday School and aroused the people to his aid The work flourished under his leadership from 1872-75 From 1875-81 students served the church. Soon after this the East and West Nissouri churches united as a field. In 1926 the church edifice was rebuilt.

In 1881 some of the members of the Beachville church, wishing for a church home nearer than Beachville, organized a church in *West Oxford at Foldens*. The church building which is still in use was built by Mr. Bent, one of the members and a splendid workman, assisted by Mr. Davis, another member

About 1860 Rev George Wilson started preaching in *Embro*. In February 1862 the Embro members became a Branch of the West Oxford church with Rev Wilson as pastor and reporting through the West Oxford church. During this year they built a church edifice at a cost of $700.00. During 1863 Rev Wilson preached at Embro on alternate Sundays as well as having charge of the West Oxford church. He maybe preached at Beachville on the other Sundays, as it was also a Branch at this time On February 13th, 1846 the members from Embro (all who had paid their liabilities to the West Oxford church) were dismissed to form an independent church Rev W C Beardsall was pastor of this church in 1847 The Baptist cause never got very strong in this Scotch Presbyterian centre and services were discontinued sometime during the next ten years The church building was removed about 1890 and later the Presbyterians erected sheds on the grounds.

About 1825 Wm. Barker of Coventry England, emigrated to Canada and settled in the township of Dereham, taking up nine hundred acres all in one block and in 1832 his family of eight or nine children followed and settled on this land. After they were settled Mr Barker senior moved to *Ingersoll*, was converted and decided that he should tell the gospel message to his fellowmen About 1837 at his own expense for material and labour he built a small circular building immediately at the rear of his own home on Thames street north. He supplied his own seating bibles and hymn books and did the preaching This was an independent Baptist cause and was continued from 1837 or 38 until the death of Mr Barker The pewter communion set of two trays a large tankard and two large goblets, used here, also the pastor's bible and hymn book are kept by descendants.

Rev W C. Beardsall of East Zorra became pastor of a church in *Ingersoll* in the fifties In 1857 they erected a brick building on Albert street off King at a cost of $1066 00 capable of seating 450. This organization was recognized in 1858 and received into the Grand River South Association in 1859 with a membership of 24.

The membership of the West Oxford church in 1859 was 191 and in 1863 was 235 Services were held at the Chapel at Piper's Corners and at the Chapel on Harris street and sometimes at the Town Hall in Ingersoll In May 1859 it was voted to have the Association in the Harris street Chapel on Friday and Saturday and on Sabbath in Daniel Harris grove if fine and if not fine in the Town Hall at Ingersoll The Association was held here in June. Covenant meetings were held at Mt. Elgin, Embro and Beachville as well as the other chapels as long as these remained Branch churches

The Baptist organization which had built a chapel on Albert street Ingersoll was opposed very strongly to the Piper's Corners organization holding meetings in Ingersoll. In May 1858 a committee of five from the West Oxford church at Piper's Corners were appointed to try and form a union with Elder Beardsall's church on lines that could be agreed on The union was not formed and on April 20th, 1861 the West Oxford church considered whether they would withdraw from Ingersoll as the Albert street church had sent them word that they would not confer with them as long as they held meetings in Ingersoll On October 19th 1861 the West Oxford church went on record by a motion that they wished to be united with the Ingersoll church as one body and again appointed a committee to confer with them but the Albert street church would accept no offers of reconciliation while the West Oxford church held any meetings in Ingersoll In November the matter was taken to Dr Fyfe and Elder Stewart of Woodstock who afterwards conferred with the Albert street church and later advised the West Oxford church to build a chapel in Ingersoll In 1864 a brick building was built on Thames street south in the Town of Ingersoll at a cost of $4000 00 The first services in the new chapel were held on September 9th 1864 and it was decided to hold services there morning and evening. Rev Thos Baldwin had become pastor of the church following the resignation of Rev George Wilson. On January 22nd 1867 it was resolved that the name "Regular Baptist Church of West Oxford" be changed to *"Thames Street Baptist Church, Ingersoll."* The Albert street church never became very strong numerically the membership in 1868 being reported as 20. But Rev W. C. Beardsall was a valued worker in the Association serving as clerk and also on numerous committees. There are no reports from this organization after 1868 and it evidently disbanded. In November 1870 Rev W. C. Beardsall united with the Thames Street church, where he afterwards became clerk and a very active worker. With the building of the new church in Ingersoll services were discontinued at Harris street and at Piper's Corners. The old building at Harris street was removed about 1869. A committee undertook to look after the graveyard of the Second Baptist Church of West Oxford' and it is in a very well kept condition with a permanent upkeep fund. The church building at Piper's Corners was sold to Mr. David French. The broken headstones from the small cemetery started by the church are said to be placed in the foundation of Mr French's barn.

On December 25th, 1853 a few Baptist members met in *Tillsonburg* to take into consideration the propriety of forming themselves into a Regular Baptist church, Deacon Thomas Robinson in the chair. A church of 17 members was organized and it was decided to call a Council to recognize them as a Regular Baptist body. This Council convened at the school house Tillsonburg on the 12th of February 1854 Rev Ephraim Smith of the 1st. Norwich church being chosen Moderator and Elder Fitch of Blenheim preaching the recognition sermon. Elder T. Rouse of Bayham gave the right hand of fellowship to the church which became a member of the Grand River Association. Silas Slaght was clerk of this newly formed church and Thomas Robinson and Silas Slaght the deacons. In 1858 the church was reorganized with but eleven members only two of whom were members of the first organization. The preaching services here, which were held in the old Temperance Hall, were irregular until 1865 when this church joined with the Mt. Elgin church under Rev John Torrance. In 1875 revival services were held for several weeks by Rev George and Mrs. Needham and two years later evangelistic services were again held under Rev Robert Cameron of Brantford. These greatly strengthened the church. The church worshipped in a small frame building which had been purchased from the Methodist church in 1879. In 1894 the present brick building was built and dedicated and in 1914 the large Sunday School wing was added.

CHAPTER VIII

NORTH OXFORD ORGANIZATION

While this church organization was being carried out in South Oxford, the Baptists had also been organizing in North Oxford.

Enos Wolverton, who was born in New York State, came to Canada about 1818. He settled in Blenheim township and the settlement which he started here was named Wolverton in 1848. Mr. Wolverton joined with the Free Communion Baptists either at Woodstock or in Blenheim as he was ordained by them following their June Association in 1832.

Rev. Jacob Goble came from New York State to Canada in 1817 and settled in the first Concession of Blenheim about 1818 being the first deacon of the Blenheim Free Communion Church which was organized in October 1822. He was chosen Moderator of the Free Communion Baptist Association of Upper Canada in 1825 and was an active leader and preacher. Some years later his son Wm. L. Goble became a storekeeper and postmaster, the post office being named Gobles after him.

The Ruperts came into Blenheim township about 1826 from New Brunswick and Henry Rupert's daughter dying about 1828 he gave a plot of ground for a cemetery and his brother-in law Frederick Burnett gave the adjacent land for a church. This church was organized as a Regular Baptist church about 1828 and was called the *First Blenheim* Baptist Church, being near Richwood in Blenheim township. Later it became known as the *Riverside* Regular Baptist church.

Sometime during the thirties or forties Enos Wolverton joined with this church.

Elder David Currey, an ordained Baptist minister, came from Lewiston, New York State about 1850 and settled near Wolverton in Blenheim. His sons David and Samuel bought the saw mill in Wolverton and James and George bought the gristmill. These mills burned in 1872 and then these four men went farming. Many from these families joined the First Blenheim Regular Baptist Church.

Also many Dawsons were members including Thomas, Elizabeth, George W. and Jane. The earliest clerk known was Joshua Burnett who was followed by John Maynard. Stocktons were also prominent in the work here.

Apparently the Riverside Church held meetings in different sections of the township and just how early little chapels were built we do not know as the early minutes of this church got burned but we have record of buildings in Wolverton and in the Western part of the township (between Drumbo and Windfall) in 1858. Monthly covenant meetings were held in the Wolverton meeting house and one would expect also in the meeting house at Windfall.

In 1844 there was a *Second Blenheim Church*, with Rev. Heman Fitch as pastor, which worked with Esquesing. It was at this church that the new Association was formed in 1848. Whether this church was at Windfall or in the Goble settlement I do not know. It apparently lapsed

On December 28th 1853 a Council met in the new meeting house at Windfall according to appointment to organize the *Second Baptist church in Blenheim*. The charter members of this church were members of the First Blenheim Church (Riverside) who lived nearer this meeting house, and included many Curreys and Griffiths Isaac Griffith became the first clerk and was followed a year or two later by G N Currey One of the Curreys became the first Deacon and Elder Wm. Haviland of the Riverside church also became pastor here This church was received into the Association in 1854 and reported a membership of 62 In 1856 the membership was 77 On January 7th 1855 the property (being part of Lot Number 17 in the 7th Concession of Blenheim) was deeded to the Second Regular Baptist Church in Blenheim for a church and burying ground, by Jeremiah Malcolm and his wife Elizabeth for the sum of £10.

The fall of 1855 there was some discussion in the Riverside church about building a new meeting house in Drumbo Some time during the next two or three years it was decided to move the building of the Second Blenheim church into Drumbo, a distance of two miles. This was attempted but the roof fell in so a frame church was built in 1858 where the Drumbo rink now stands at a cost of $1000.00 and became known as the *Drumbo church*. The Association met here in 1860 and again in 1864. This building was sold to George Law when the new brick church was built in 1876 a short distance from the first site. A parsonage was purchased in 1922. The property between Drumbo and Windfall belonging to the Second Blenheim church is now the Drumbo cemetery being deeded to the Cemetery Board by Wm. Pinkham and David Maynard of the said Baptist church

In May 1857 the members of the First Blenheim church (Riverside) in the Wolverton district organized as a branch and services and baptisms are recorded there but their membership remained with the First Blenheim church until January 14th 1871 when twenty-six members received their letters to form a church at *Wolverton*. In 1862 a frame church building was erected at Wolverton, at a cost of $600.00 The lumber for the building was cut in Currey's saw mill the work being done largely by volunteer labor G N Currey Enos Wolverton and G W. Dawson were the first trustees of the property, which was given by David Currey and his wife Hannah. The recognition Council met on February 7th 1871 and organized the church Geo. N Currey and George W Dawson were the first deacons. George N Currey was the first clerk and served eight years being succeeded by A. Wolverton who served in this capacity forty-six years. The first pastor was Rev Theophilis Booker

Early pastors of the First Blenheim church of whom we have any record were Elder Heman Fitch Sr who was here in 1834, Rev Francis Pickle who died while here and is buried in the Riverside cemetery Rev. John Bray 1849, Elder David Currey 1854-5, Elder Geo Patten 1858-61, Elder Heman P. Fitch Jr 1861 64, Rev Christopher Perrin 1864-67

In May 1867 Wolverton (still a branch church with membership in the Riverside church) Drumbo and the Riverside churches united as a field with Rev George Wilson as pastor In 1869 Rev T Booker became pastor and remained for several years. On March 4th 1878 "a meeting was called to determine which is best viz. to repair or rebuild church and continue worship or to dissolve and unite with sister churches The gradual falling off of membership and attendance is noted caused by removals and a growing inclination among the masses in favor of village churches. People are willing to go farther to secure better accommodation and with more inducements such as singing." Some were "willing to stick to the ship if it can float." The membership was old but a large proportion "were quite unable to do anything towards support of the church." The decision which was finally reached was "That whereas several of our most prominent members have removed from our midst and others being contiguous to either the Drumbo or Wolverton churches and further considering the inconvenient situation of the church, we, after prayerful consideration think it would not tend to the interests of the body to incur the expense necessary in repairing or rebuilding the church and though sincerely regretting the circumstances which compel us to take the step, yet we think it conducive to our best interests to dissolve and unite as far as possible with sister Baptist churches." May 4th 1874. Quite a number had taken letters but there being "still quite a number like sheep without a shepherd" it was resolved to maintain the visibility of the church and keep our place in the Association, praying that the Good Shepherd will deign to bless our feeble efforts in building up his spiritual church." They secured Rev. H. Fitch as pastor and services were held that summer and maybe some the next year when the minutes are discontinued, the last record being on October 2nd, 1875.

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CHAPTER IX.

FREE WILL BAPTIST ORGANIZATION

In 1841 the Free Communion denomination joined the Free Will denomination and during the forties and fifties Free Will Evangelists came over from the United States and became very aggressive in Oxford County.

The Woodstock Free Communion church had gradually been drawing towards the Regular Baptist view point but there were those in its membership who differed. The Woodstock branch churches were two in Zorra township, and one each in Blenheim, Oxford and South Norwich townships.

In these smaller churches it was not possible to obtain ordained preachers except every two or three weeks and travelling evangelists were made welcome.

Elder Jacob Goble of Blenheim, Elder Reuben Crandall and Elder Darius Cross were the most frequent preachers in Blenheim and Zorra. Elder Marks, whose wife was from Zorra township preached several times in 1830 in Oxford, Zorra, and Norwich townships. In 1832 he spent ten days and preached twelve sermons in different neighborhoods around Zorra. Other Free Will evangelists including Elder Stars also preached in Mr. Rowell's Chapel on the 10th line of Zorra and introduced their own ideas of church doctrine and polity which were adopted by Mr. Rowell and most of the members. Two brothers, both Free Will Evangelists, moved into the county about this time. Their names were Jacob and Stephen Griffin and they were very zealous in spreading Free Will sentiments and starting Free Will causes in the county

Several families of Regular Baptists moved into Zorra at this time and settled a few miles north of the Rowell Chapel. They came from near Peterboro where they had been members of the Colony Line Baptist Church north of Peterboro under the pastoral care of Rev J Gilmour. These families attended Mr Rowell's chapel, but, being strong in their convictions of church faith and polity and naturally associating together refused to unite with them. They finally withdrew and held services of their own. In 1849 Rev J Gilmour of Peterboro visited these former members of his church and also Mr and Mrs Francis Malcolm who had been members of his church in Aberdeen, Scotland, and who had settled in this neighborhood. Mr Gilmour advised these Baptists to organize a Baptist church and build a meeting house for themselves and he contributed sixty dollars (a munificent sum in those days) towards the expense of building. Mr Malcolm gave one acre of land on the south west corner of his Lot (number 15) on the 16th Line for the church and he and his four sons, just growing into young manhood, also did most of the work of building the meeting house, being assisted by the other members. The neat frame building was opened for public service June 1855 Rev J Gilmour kindly coming from Peterboro to conduct the service. The church of eleven members was named the *East Zorra 16th Line* Baptist church. Francis Malcolm and James Lockhart were the first deacons. There was no settled pastor for some years, the pulpit being supplied by Rev W C Beardsall (who had settled in East Zorra north of the church) Rev Edward Topping of Woodstock Rev Walter Milne of the Queen's Bush Watson Robinson a member of the church or Rev W H, Landon,

Rev Mr Landon became the first settled pastor in 1852 followed by Rev E Topping. In 1857 Rev John Gerrie preached a few times and was unanimously requested to become pastor. He was paid $300 per year in cash and this was supplemented by contributions of household supplies, food for his horse, firewood etc For several years the church provided all his firewood by means of wood bees. He served here for eleven years. Mr and Mrs Gerrie are buried in the Innerkip cemetery

A school teacher with Christadelphian views coming into the neighborhood, many in the community adopted Christadelphian doctrines. The sons of Francis Malcolm became leading Christadelphians and discussions and dissension in the church led to a split in March 1859 the church becoming nearly equally divided between the two parties. For two years the Christadelphians held the chapel, the Baptists obtaining possession again in 1861. The church joined the Grand River South Association in 1868. It transferred to the Brant Association in 1871 and again in 1886 to the Woodstock Association. A white brick church was built during 1877 Services were carried on here until 1937 when, owing to the small membership and need of repairs, the organization disbanded and joined elsewhere.

In the spring of 1863 Rev Mr Gerrie assisted by Rev W Milne held three weeks of special services. Amongst the converts at this time was George Baird of Bright who afterwards built a Baptist chapel at *Bright* and a church was organized in 1866, Rev J Gerrie acting as pastor there also. This church joined the Grand River North Association and carried on for a number of years. The Baird family moving away it weakened and finally discontinued.

The Free Will Baptists continued to meet in the Rowell chapel for a time. Then on the second day of September 1848 a church was organized at the white school house on the 12th Line of East Zorra (tollgate) named *"The First Free Baptist church of East Zorra."* Elder Stephen Griffin conducted the organizing and gave the right hand of fellowship to the thirty members. Stratton Rowell and Samuel Tree were appointed deacons and Wm R. Brown clerk. At the first covenant meeting eighty two spoke and nearly one hundred partook of the first commemoration of the Lord's Supper by the church.

Apparently all those for miles around believing in Free Will doctrines joined this church, as the membership included the Rowells and others from the 14th Line organization the Browns from the 16th Line, Levi B Ferry and Abigail Burtch from the Oxford Church Woodstock, and the Trees from the 12th Line. Services were held in the tollgate school house on the 12th Line.

In 1851 because of the size of the field they commenced to hold services alternately in the 12th Line school house and in Brown's school house on the 16th Line.

In February 1854 land was purchased on the south east corner of Lot No. 11 in the 16th Concession (17th Line) by trustees of a Free Will Baptist church, members of the First Free Baptist church of East Zorra. A chapel was erected and services were held here until sometime in the eighties. In 1890 or 91 the chapel was sold and moved to Innerkip, where it became the C.O.F Hall.

On February 26th 1859 the *Second Free Will Baptist Church of East Zorra* was organized under the superintendence of Rev Jacob Griffin. Four were duly acknowledged as members, five were added the next day and by the end of the year the membership was 22. Land was purchased and a chapel was erected on Lot 26 in the 11th Concession being on the sideroad two miles north of the present village of Hickson. During the fifty five years that this church functioned nearly two hundred people were baptized and joined the church.

In Blenheim township the Free Communion Branch church which was organized in 1822 with Rev Jacob Goble as Deacon, would have his continuous care as well as help from visiting ministers. The same supply often preached at both the Blenheim church and at the Rowell chapel. Apparently Blenheim had no church building the meetings being held in the Gobles' school house. In the summer of 1846 Rev W. C. Beardsall of East Zorra became pastor of the Blenheim and Zorra churches, preaching regularly every two weeks at each church for nearly three years.

In 1839 a family named Kennedy settled in South Blenheim near Richwood. Being Free Will Baptists they were instrumental, with the aid of the Griffin brothers, in organizing a Free Will church in the early forties. In 1850 Elder Stephen Griffin being pastor they built a rough cast meeting house at *Richwood* at a cost of $1000. Meetings were held here until they gradually discontinued about 1870. The church building was sold a little before 1890 and the sheds in 1900. A cemetery had been started in connection with the church and the property is now the Richwood cemetery.

Pastors of the Riverside (1st. Blenheim) Regular Baptist church preached in the Gobles school house in the fifties. Any Free Communion

Baptists here who had become Free Will Baptists would have joined the Richwood church.

In 1858 a branch of the Drumbo Regular Baptist church was formed at Gobles Corners and in May 1862 a Regular Baptist church called the *Gobles Corners Church* was organized with Jasper G Goble as clerk and his father Wm L. Goble (a son of Elder Jacob Goble) as Deacon. Mr Richard Kipp gave land for a church building and a white brick building was erected in 1878 This building later burned down and was rebuilt on the same site and reopened in 1893 as the *Creditville Baptist church*. The work discontinued here about 1925 the remaining members joining neighboring churches and the building being sold in the spring of 1929.

In Oxford township the Free Communion Branch church had apparently used the Harris Street Chapel when the regular Baptists were not needing it. The Free Will evangelists gathered together a nucleus for a church here and organized a church in *Salford* about 1850 Elder Stephen Griffin, Elder George Dennecker and Rev Henry Blackmer all served this church. It later joined with the Regular Baptists being reorganized and recognized as a Regular Baptist church on March 20th 1877 Rev J Dempsey was the Moderator and Rev C Goodspeed clerk of the council. Rev R. J Lobb was the first pastor of this church of fifty-one members.

A Free Will Baptist organization was also formed at *Sweaburg* which united with the Methodists and Presbyterians in building a Union Meeting House, each organization electing one trustee to the property and each having equal privileges in the use of the building An agreement to this effect was drawn up in 1868 and registered in the registry office at Woodstock Of these three church groups only the Methodists survived and the organization now belongs to the United Church of Canada.

In South Norwich the Free Communion church sent delegates regularly to the Free Communion Baptist Association. In 1862 the membership is reported as 33. Elder Ephraim Smith was pastor at this time. We have no record of any Free Will organization having been formed in this neighborhood.

A Free Will church was erected in *Woodstock* in 1858 at the corner of Peel and Reeve streets Rev W H Trowbridge was the pastor here in 1862-63. Nothing is known of the activities of this church or just when it disbanded.

In East Zorra the First Free Baptist church got into difficulties in 1861 over evidence which one of its members (an ordained Elder and travelling preacher) gave at a law-suit and which was considered "unchristianable' He refused to acknowledge the charge made against him by the church and was considered expelled He appealed to the Quarterly Meeting and they asked the church to reconsider his case. In March 1862, at a meeting of the church the motion to reconsider the case from the beginning was lost. The May meeting of the Oxford Quarterly Meeting turned the church out of the Association. In June the church voted on disbanding the vote being a tie. They concluded to canvass the church on the subject. As there are no more minutes the organization evidently didn't revive.

However later a new organization was formed in this district as the *South Zorra Free Will church* This organization or the former one, had meetings in a Hall on the east side of the 13th Line on Lot 6 In 1870 a white brick church was built on Lot 7 in the 12th Concession (13th Line). Rev Robert Martin was their first pastor and during his pastorate the church was built. In 1878 under Rev. Thos. MacElroy they commenced working with the Second Free Baptist church of East Zorra (12th Line.) In 1907 the 13th Line church commenced working with the 16th Line Regular Baptist Church and the 12th Line church joined with Tavistock Regular Baptist church in forming a field. The 12th Line church finally disbanded and the church was sold in 1917. The grounds are still held as a pioneer cemetery.

The South Zorra church withdrew from the 16th Line church in 1928 and joined the Union of Regular Baptists and in 1931 withdrew from this Union and joined the Independent Fellowship of Baptist churches.

Early Free Will ministers whose names appear as serving these Oxford churches are: Jacob Griffin, Stephen Griffin, George Dusocker, Michael Doyle, Stephen Tree, Wm. H. Trowbridge, L. S. Parmerlee, Henry Blackman, Robert Martin, Thos. MacElroy, Chas. Clark, George Moore, Mr. Webster and C. W. Lane.

Oxford churches held a quarterly meeting and they belonged to a Free Will Association which took in Iona, Middlemass, Round Plains, London, Bloomsburg, Townsend Centre and Brook, where fellowship, prayer and testimony meetings are reported as being held.

It is stated that in 1859 there were 32 Free Will Baptist Churches in Canada, one half of which were west of Toronto.

CHAPTER X.

LATER ORGANIZATIONS

About 1872 a sabbath school was commenced in the west end of Woodstock by the Oxford church of Woodstock and was carried on successfully, the meetings being held on Dundas Street West.

On June 13th 1875 the Young People's Christian Association in connection with the church reported that they proposed to buy a lot to establish a sabbath school in the West end and asked the liberty to have the deed made to the trustees of the church, which request was granted. A lot was procured on the corner of Hunter street and Vansittart Ave, and in the spring of 1876 the building was erected. Preaching services were held here at 6.30 P. M.

But this location on Vansittart Ave. did not prove a wise choice. During the years the services were held on Dundas Street West, the attendance at the sabbath school was large and the occasional preaching by the students was well attended and a deep interest felt."

But the Mission on Vansittart Ave. went down and was finally discontinued. On April 13th 1881 an offer of $900 for the property was accepted. Brethren Wolverton and McLaurin of the Oxford Church always felt that it was wrong to give up the west end school and agitated resuming and trying to recover the lost opportunity, this time by starting a church for the convenience of the west end members. "Persistent plead-ing at length got the members interested. Lots were purchased at the corner of Hunter and Oxford streets for the sum of $1400.00 and a brick building capable of seating three hundred persons was erected. Forty two members of the Oxford Church were granted letters in October 1882 in order that they might organize. The organizing meeting was held on Nov 7th Dr E W Dadson being chairman and W J Chave secretary of the meeting. The church chose the name *The Oxford Street Baptist Church*.

A farewell social was held in the parent church to give expression to the good wishes of those who remained to those who formed the new church. About forty more took their letters to the Oxford St. Church during the first year.

Recognition services were held at the church on the 20th of December 1882 the church joining the Woodstock Association of the Ontario and Quebec Convention.

In 1926 during the Convention controversy they withdrew and joined the Union of Regular Baptists and in July 1931 when this Union divided, they became members of the Independent Fellowship of Baptist churches.

On November the 19th 1890 following the organizing of the Oxford Street Baptist church, the Oxford Church changed its name to "*The First Baptist Church*."

On January 14th 1877 a sabbath school was organized in the east end of Woodstock by the Oxford (First) Church. In 1885 a lot was purchased on Centre Street and in 1886 a building was erected. This East End Mission is still carried on by the First Church.

In January 1875 Rev C Goodspeed of the Woodstock church baptized seven candidates at Strathallan on the 12th Line of East Zorra. On February 8th the Woodstock church granted letters to the members, for the purpose of forming a church at *Strathallan*. This church was organized on February 9th 1875. Services were carried on in a frame chapel for about ten years but the cause never got very strong here and the work was discontinued. For most of the ten years this church and the East Zorra 16th Line church united as a field.

During the pastorate of Rev J D McColl at the Drumbo Church the Needham Brothers (Thomas William and Ben) were procured as evangelists. They also held services at Plattsville. Following these special services on January 30th 1880 a church of fourteen members was organized at the home of Mr James Greenfield *Plattsville*. Ten of these members received letters of dismission from the Drumbo church in order to organize in Plattsville. Rev J D McColl of Drumbo became the pastor and assisted in the organization. James Greenfield and Charles Baird were elected the first Deacons and James Baird the first clerk and Treasurer. Archibald Baird was the first candidate for baptism being baptized in the Drumbo church by Rev J D McColl. Later baptisms were usually in the river Nith. Twelve members were added to the church the first year. Recognition services were held in the Plattsville Town Hall on the 25th of February 1880 and the following third of June the church was received into the Brant Association at their gathering in the village of Onondaga. During recent years they were an Independent Baptist cause and they have now disbanded.

In 1878 Rev J B Moore was called to the pastorate of the Tillsonburg Church and he was induced to take up an appointment at Brownsville. It was not long before the Brownsville members of the Tillsonburg church applied for dismission for the purpose of organizing at *Brownsville*. The church was organized on January 25th 1880 with thirteen members. In February plans were started towards building a House of Worship. This building was erected and paid for that fall and dedicated on November 14th 1880 Professor Torrance being the speaker

A Council convened at Brownsville on May 26th 1880 and duly recognized the organization as a Regular Baptist Church. Brownsville worked with Tillsonburg church under the same pastor until 1894, when they withdrew and engaged a pastor as a separate cause.

In 1928 they withdrew from the Convention of Ontario and Quebec and joined the Union of Regular Baptists.

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CHAPTER XI.

CO-OPERATION

The early Baptist churches in Ontario being in widely separated districts knew but little of each other These early Baptists in Oxford had come mostly from the United States and their intercourse and fellowship were with the States. But the early eastern Ontario Baptists mostly came from and had their fellowship with Great Britain Efforts were repeatedly made towards co-operation among the Baptists of the Province strong convictions and a strong feeling of independence making progress towards union slow Early churches in Eastern Ontario were all open, communionists but they gradually drew toward the strict communion practise Baptists of Western Ontario were perhaps about equally divided on communion during the first quarter century the drift being towards strict communion (Fitch)

A three day conference was held at Townsend in 1818 called the Clinton Baptist Conference Only four churches—Clinton Charlotteville Townsend and Oxford (township)—being represented. Elder Titus Finch and Elder Fairchild were present, Deacon Zachariah Burtch being the representative from the First Oxford Church At this conference there was organized "The Upper Canada Domestic Missionary Society for the sending of the Gospel to the destitute of this Province" which was the first co-operative Missionary effort on the part of Baptists of the province. (Schott) In December 1826 the Oxford Church appointed a committee of seven to act in the Missionary Society in Oxford

In 1819 the Oxford Church joined with others in forming the Western Association at Charlotteville. Later it joined the Grand River Association which was formed soon after this. In 1820 delegates from Oxford (township) church were appointed to attend the Conference at Malahide, these delegates being Elder S Mabee and Brothers Darius Cross Nicholas French and Zachariah Burtch In June 1824 they appointed delegates to the Association In 1835 delegates were appointed to the Upper Canada Association In June 1838 the Oxford church voted "to accept as ours the Articles that the Association formed in 1832 and recommended to the churches.

An Association of the Free Communion Churches of Upper Canada had been formed immediately following the organizing of the separate churches. An effort was made in 1829 to form a union between these churches and the Free Will churches around London, which belonged to an Association of churches in New York State. All these churches were far from others of similar faith but no union was formed.

From the Baptist Historical Year Book of 1900 we learn that in the summer of 1837 a deputation from the Eastern Association (Niagara District) and a committee of the open communionists (I think Free Communionists would be more correct) of which Elder Landon (of the Oxford Free Communion church, Woodstock) was a leading member, decided to call a convention of all the Baptist churches in the Province to be held at Townsend the third week in October for the promotion of brotherly unity and co-operation in missionary and publication work. The committee of open communionists agreed "that the best interests of the cause in general, and the Baptist denomination in particular, require that a union should be effected, in so far at least as that the efforts of the two bodies may be united in the cause of God and the benevolent enterprises of the day." The committee had learned from the deputation "with the liveliest satisfaction, that the difference in our respective practice with regard to the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is all that at this moment prevents the most perfect union." The committee recommended that three successive Monday evenings immediately preceding the convention "be solemnly set apart by every church in the Province for special prayer to Almighty God for heavenly wisdom to direct his servants at said Convention." The Convention assembled. All were agreed that it were desirable to cast away all names by which parties among us are designated, and unitedly to adopt the simple name of Baptists."

Elder Landon and Deacon A. Burtch were appointed delegates to this convention by the Woodstock church and apparently Woodstock church joined the Grand River Baptist Association at this time as in May 1840 Elder Landon and four laymen were appointed delegates to the Association at Waterford. However in July 1840 they withdrew from the Association—no reason is given for their withdrawal. In January 1842 the church voted to restrict the communion to baptized believers and so came into harmony with the practice of the regular Baptist churches of the Province. In 1843, when the Canada Baptist Union was formed, Rev. N. Bosworth, who was pastor of the Woodstock Church at this time, became president of the Union. This Union was not lasting. The Regular Baptist Union of Canada which was formed at St. George in 1848 also failed. The communion question caused the greatest difficulty to co-operation. "In 1850 there was no Convention, no college, no paper, and the denomination seemed hopelessly divided." (J. H. Farmer). All societies had lapsed owing to dissension.

In October 1851 in an old Presbyterian chapel in the city of Hamilton the Regular Baptist Missionary Society of Upper Canada was organized. This society took in the churches of the Grand River North and Grand River South Associations. "Around it gathered in succession the Educational (1858), Superannuated Ministers (1864), Foreign Missionary (1866), Church Edifice (1867) and Publication (1882) Societies." (J. H. Farmer)

These Societies met in Annual Convention. The Directors of these Conventions include many members of Oxford Churches. Archibald Burtch of Woodstock was vice president in 1860 and John Bower of Ingersoll was vice-president in 1861.

The Canadian Baptist Missionary Convention East, with the country east of Kingston for its field was organized on similar lines in 1858.

In 1888 the Home Mission Conventions, East and West, the Foreign Mission Society, Church Edifice Society and all other interests of the Convention, became merged in the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec.

The Free Communionists in the United States had joined with the Free Will churches in 1841. The Woodstock Church and the other churches in Oxford which had formed the Free Communion Association of Upper Canada did not join the Free Will Body with the rest of their denomination, though it was here and because of them that the movement started.

In 1881 the Woodstock church applied for fellowship in the Grand River Association and a committee was appointed to inquire into their faith and practice. But it was not until 1887 that it joined the Association and the (now) Ontario and Quebec Convention.

1819-1845.

The minutes of the *Grand River Association* of 1844 (the twenty-fifth Anniversary) which have been preserved report 26 churches with a total membership of 2001. Oxford churches reporting were:

(Organized)
1828—1st Blenheim (Riverside)—Rev. Francis Pickle.
2nd Blenheim—Rev. Beman Fitch.
1809—1st Oxford.
1826—2nd Oxford (Harris Street)
1832—1st Norwich (Springford)
1837—2nd Norwich (Burgessville)
1836—Zorra (near Zorra Station)
1826—Nissouri (West Nissouri)

This meeting which convened at Beamsville in June decided to meet again in October with the Second Baptist Church in Oxford to consider the school. The Montreal College was a contentious subject at this time. It was also resolved to appoint one delegate from each church to investigate the expediency of dividing this Association.

1845-1888

Thirteen churches were set off from this body to go with certain churches set off from the Long Point Association, thus to form a new Association, these churches to send delegates to meet with the Second Blenheim Church in June 1845 to organize a new Association. This Association retained the name *Grand River Association*, these churches being in the Grand River Area.

There had also been some changes in the church organizations. 1st *Blenheim* and 1st and 2nd *Norwich* churches were reported in this new Associational grouping. The Association met with the 2nd Blenheim church and yet eight years later we find a new organization given the name of *Second Baptist Church in Blenheim* and received into this Association the following year (1854) with a membership of 62. In October 1844 the Association had met with the *Second Baptist Church in Oxford* and yet in 1846 this same church requested admission into the Association. It was received in 1850 and continued until 1857 *The First Oxford Church* remained active and sent their pastor Elder Wm Freeman and Harrison Forbes as delegates to the Hamilton Convention in October 1861 At *Zorra* the former church had become extinct and another organization was formed and received in 1849 with Elder Isaac Elliott as pastor and Benjamin and Winchell Vandusen as delegates. The *Nissouri* organization also lapsed. The township of Nissouri being divided in 1851 West Nissouri became part of Middlesex County and the West Nissouri Church on reorganizing in 1852 was not in the Grand River Association

On January 22nd 1842 the First Oxford church appointed Elder Babee and Brothers Aldridge and Crage to assist in organizing the first church in *Dereham*. The church joined the Grand River Association In 1846 it reported Jess S. Woodward as clerk and James Bodwell Jr as a delegate. The membership was 45. In 1854 58 Elder Isaac Elliott was pastor and J W Waggoner Mt. Elgin Post Office, clerk.

Tillsonburg in Dereham township was organized in 1853 and joined this Association in 1854.

On March 14th 1848 the 1st Church of West Oxford Resolved to consider the members of the church in East Oxford as a Branch and grant them the liberty to receive members At the Grand River Associational gathering in 1849 the *Oxford East* Church of 19 members was received the delegates from the church being Elder Ira Bowey Deacon Samuel Babee Brothers Israel Gibbs, Daniel Smith and Chester Gibbs In 1851 Rev W C. Beardsall was pastor here

1856 1869

On Saturday June 14th 1856 at the 12th Annual Meeting of this Association held in the First Regular Baptist Church in Brantford, the motion dividing the Association into two was carried.—twenty two churches forming the Grand River Association North and twenty five forming the Grand River Association South These Associations were composed of strict communion Baptist churches

The *Grand River North Association* included *1st Blenheim*, *2nd Blenheim* (called Drumbo in 1859) *Zorra* (sometimes called East Zorra and sometimes South Zorra) no detailed reports after 1860 *Bright* reported in 1858, *Gobles Corners* reported in 1868 and *Tavistock* reported in 1864 This Association met in the 1st Blenheim church in 1857 in Drumbo in 1860 and again in 1864.

The *Grand River South Association* included *Dereham*, *1st Norwich*, *2nd Norwich Tillsonburg West Oxford*, (1st Oxford) *Woodstock* received in 1857 *Otterville* received in 1858, *Ingersoll* received in 1859 *Mt. Elgin* received in 1862, *East Oxford* received in 1862 *Beachville* received in 1867 *East Zorra 16th Line* joined in 1865 *Salford* received in 1877 *Brownsville* received in 1880 *Oxford West* (Foldens) received in 1881 and *Norwich* received in 1884.

The Oxford East organization received in 1849 is not the East Oxford church received in 1862, but seems to be an earlier organization of East Oxford Baptists which lapsed. The membership was small Its location is not mentioned. The first West Oxford church moved to Ingersoll in 1864 and a new church was organized in West Oxford at Foldens in 1881

Neither is the location of the Dereham church known. The only records we have of it are from organization in 1842 until 1856.

In 1868 a committee was appointed from both South and North Associations to consult on the propriety of dividing the two Associations into three.

The proposal did not find favor in the South

The North Association in 1869 adopted as much of the report as related to the churches of this Association and divided into the Midland Counties Association and the Brant Association The *Brant Association* took in all Oxford churches in the former Grand River North Association with the exception of Tavistock which joined the Midland Counties Association and later the Guelph Association The first meeting of the Brant Association was held with the Riverside church near Richwood in Blenheim, on *Friday* June 3rd 1870

Fourteen churches reported including 1st *Blenheim* (Riverside) *Bright Drumbo Gobles Corners* In 1871 the *East Zorra 16th Line* transferred to the Brant Association and also this year *Wolverton* was received In 1880 the newly formed church at Plattsville was received.

At the thirty first Annual Meeting of the Grand River Association (South) held at Ingersoll, the re-adjustment of Associational boundaries was considered and changes adopted the new Associations to meet in June 1888. Prof. J H Farmer was moderator of this meeting and Rev H Woodward was secretary-treasurer at this time. Prof. N Wolverton was appointed Moderator of the new *Woodstock Association*, which met for the first time at Springford in 1888 The following is taken from a circular letter sent out by Prof Wolverton Prof Farmer and Rev H Woodward — "To the members of the churches of the Woodstock Association, Dear Brethren and Sisters:—Another year having passed away it is again our privilege as a committee to address you We are doubtless all forcibly reminded of the changes that each year brings with it, but to us as an Association this year has been full of very radical changes. We are a new Association from being one of the oldest and largest we meet this year as one of the smallest and newest Instead of numbering as heretofore over 4000 we shall now amount to little more than a third of that number While in this there may be some disadvantages, there are certainly many advantages. Any society may become so large as to be unwieldy old institutions may get into ruts out of which it is sometimes very difficult to remove them. A few come to the front as prominent workers, while the many so merge their individuality into the great body that they are scarcely seen and their influence is little felt. Our numbers being so much smaller we shall become more generally and thoroughly acquainted and shall thus realize more of the benefit of the Christian intercourse that results from these gatherings Many churches can have the Woodstock Association meet with them which could not by any possibility have invited the old Association with its large number of delegates We venture to hope and remind you that the great benefit to us will be better opportunity for more effective work for Jesus Christ. Our Association is designed to be an efficient means for mutual helpfulness and for aggressive work"

This Association included all the Oxford Churches in the Grand River South Association and also Burford and Scotland churches in Brant County and Goshen and Windham Churches in Norfolk County East Zorra 16th Line transferred from the Brant Association to the Woodstock Association

1897-1936

At the Ninth Annual Meeting of the Woodstock Association held at Tillsonburg 1896 it was "Resolved that the delegates of the Woodstock Association assembled in Tillsonburg June 3rd, having heard a statement from Brother Grant of Ingersoll regarding the recommendation of the Convention meeting in Montreal re the alteration of Associational boundaries, desire to express their sympathy with the same, and appoint a committee of five brethren to confer with a similar committee of the Brant and Norfolk Associations agreeing to abide by the recommendation of such committee if agreeable to the churches." The Brant Association also appointed a committee at their Annual gathering held at Paris.

"Pursuant to agreement the delegates from the Brant Association met with those of the Woodstock Association in the Oxford Street church Woodstock in 1897 A committee was appointed to consider the question of union and report to the meeting They reported as follows I That the Union of the Brant and the Woodstock Associations is desirable and that we do now so unite to form an Association. II. That so far as it may be deemed necessary District meetings be held with the smaller churches, two or more such meetings to be held during the year III That the name of the new Association be The Oxford and Brant Association." After discussion this was adopted and Rev W L. Newton was elected the first Moderator

In 1930 a readjustment of Associations was discussed throughout the Convention Oxford-Brant Association was not in favor of the proposed plan of enlarging the Associations and no change was made here

List of Organizations

1809-present—First Oxford Regular Baptist in West Oxford Township.
Moved to Ingersoll about 1864 and changed the name to Thames Street Baptist Church, Ingersoll in 1887
1822 present—First Free Communion Baptist in the town of Oxford (Woodstock) joined Ontario-Quebec Convention 1887
1822—about 1845—Blenheim Free Communion
1824—about 1840—south Norwich Free Communion.
1825—183 —Zorra Free Communion
1826—became extinct—reorganized 1849 — 1860 Zorra Regular Baptist (Zorra P O)
1828—reorganized 1852 present—West Nissouri Regular Baptist (now in Middlesex)
1828-1844—reorganized 1848-1857 Second Oxford Regular Baptist.
1828-1875—First Blenheim (Riverside near Richwood)
1830-1849—Zorra 18th Line Free Communion.
1831-about 1844—Second Oxford Free Communion.
1832 present—First Norwich (Springford)
1837 present—Second Norwich (Burgessville)
About 1837-about 1850—Ingersoll Independent Congn.
——1845—Second Blenheim—unknown location.
184 to 1870—Richwood Free Will Baptist.
1842 1856—Dereham Regular Baptist—unknown location.
1849 1862—First Free Will of East Zorra.
1848-185 —East Oxford Regular Baptist, location unknown.
1853-1938—East Zorra 16th Line Regular Baptist.

About 1850—Salford Free Will—Reorganized 1877 as Regular to present.
1855-present—Tillsonburg Regular
1856-1866—Ingersoll Reg. Baptist, Albert Street.
1858-present—Second Blenheim, now Drumbo Regular
1857 1871—a Branch church 1871 present—Wolverton Regular Baptist.
1858-1913—Second Free Will of East Zorra ((12th Line)
1858 present—Otterville Regular Baptist.
1859 1861—a branch church, 1861 present—Mt. Elgin Regular Baptist.
1859 1862—a Branch church, 1862-present—East Oxford Regular Baptist.
1860-187 —Embro Regular Baptist,
1861 present—Beachville Regular Baptist.
1861 1864—lapsed 1877 present—East Nissouri Regular
1862-a few years—Woodstock Free Will
1866-a few years—Bright Regular Baptist.
1863-1868—a Branch church. 1868 1925 — Gobles Corners, also called Creditville, Regular
1864-a few years—Sweaburg Free Will
1869 1912—Tavistock Regular Baptist.
1870-present—South Zorra Free Will (13th Line)
1875 1885—Strathallan Regular Baptist.
1880 1935—Plattsville Regular Baptist.
1880 present—Brownsville.
1881-present—West Oxford (Foldens) Regular
1884-present—Norwich Regular
1893 present—Oxford Street, Woodstock.
1926-present—Otterville Union of Regular Baptists.

It is surprising to note that of all the organizations started during the first fifty years of settlement in Oxford, only four continue to serve—West Oxford of 1809 now serving at Ingersoll, First Church Woodstock since 1822, Springford since 1832 and Burgessville since 1867. The village churches organized in more recent years are of course more abiding.

SUNDAY SCHOOLS

There was a Regular Baptist Sabbath School Convention in connection with the Grand River South Association composed of two delegates from each sabbath school in connection with the churches of the Association. Annual meetings were held on the Thursday following the Associational meetings and at the same place. A Constitution was drawn up in 1870.

In September 1885 an agitation was started for the organization of a Baptist Sunday School Society. This subject was dealt with by the Home Missionary Convention in October who recommended that Sunday School work be made prominent in the annual discussions at each of the Associations. In April 1886 at a meeting of the Board of the Home Mission Society a committee was appointed to look after the interests of our schools generally. This committee sent out forms for statistics, the first returns being received in 1886. This committee later acted under authority of both the Home and Foreign Mission Societies.

Brant Association on June 1st 1887 by motion pledged itself to support and sustain the work of the Sunday School Committee and appointed Pastor Fraser of Gobles as Sunday School secretary for the Association.

The Grand River South Sabbath School Convention which had been holding its meetings following the Associational gathering in 1888 decided to hold its sessions on the afternoon and one address on the evening of the second day of the Associational meeting.

B.Y.P.U

A Fraternal Union of all Young People's Societies in Baptist churches in Ontario and Quebec was organized May 4th and 5th 1892. This Union was formed "for the unification of Baptist Young People, their increased spirituality, their stimulation in Christian service, their edification in Scripture knowledge, their instruction in Baptist history and doctrine and in church history generally and their enlistment in Missionary activity through existing denominational organizations."

Mr James Baird of Plattsville was on the Board of Managers for 1892-93.

THE BOARD OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

At the Ontario and Quebec Convention in October 1934 the Sunday School work and Young People's work were united under one Board called "The Board of Religious Education of the Baptist Convention." This Board is composed of a Sunday School committee of fifteen members and a Young People's Committee of fifteen members, these committees submitting all plans to the Board for its approval. The Board of Religious Education is responsible for the administration of all religious educational work in our Convention.

DISTRICT MEETINGS

The Regular Baptist Ministerial Association of the County of Norfolk in session June 11th 1868 in the Regular Baptist church at Scotland wrote to "the Regular Baptist Association Grand River South" respectfully recommending to the serious consideration of this Association the propriety and necessity of holding quarterly meetings in this Association for the following purposes viz. 1st. To afford the ministers of the Association an opportunity of more frequent intercourse and consultation with each other for their mutual benefit and improvement and on such subjects of pastoral labours and duties as are constantly recurring amongst us. 2nd. For consulting together on Associational work. 3rd. That more frequent opportunity may thus be given for the discussion of denominational subjects, together with the rousing up the energies of declining churches, the encouraging the drooping spirits of ministers, the giving of timely counsels so as to prevent the frequent difficulties in churches and betwixt churches, and otherwise cultivating a higher tone of Christian life in the denomination and a more general and mutual feeling for one another in all the various branches of Christian work."

These quarterly meetings were held regularly in the Grand River South Association from 1869-1877.

The need for District meetings was mentioned when the Oxford-Brant Association was formed and provision made for two or more such meetings to be held yearly.

These meetings were the forerunners of the present Pastors' and Members' Conference which meets several times during the year.

CHAPTER XII.

WOODSTOCK COLLEGE

The need for a good academy which would also prepare young men for the ministry led to much thought and discussion throughout the denomination. Montreal Theological College after bravely struggling for years had succumbed for want of support and sympathy Other projects also fell through. But the idea of founding a college of some kind had never been long absent from the minds of the leading men in the denomination.

In 1856 the plan for a Literary and Theological School was submitted to the people The other schools and plans had been for Theological training only This new school plan included ladies as well as men, as two schools could not be built. Rev R. A. Fyfe of the Bond Street Church, Toronto, was the leader in this plan He held decided opinions as to the value of education under Christian influences and saw that, at that time not one in fifty of the residents in the rural districts could obtain a high school training without leaving home

Three places desired to have the school—Fonthill Brantford and Woodstock. All guaranteed financial help and the offers of Woodstock parties were considered most satisfactory and were accepted. The land for the school was given by Mr Archibald Burtch and Woodstock friends guaranteed $16 000.00 including the value of the site towards the school $3 000.00 of this was to be raised in Oxford County

The first important meeting of subscribers was held at Woodstock in March 1857 when the subscribers formally organized as "The Canadian Literary Institute" and elected their first Board of trustees. Mr Wm Winter was elected chairman, Mr John Hatch of Woodstock vice-chairman, Mr James Kintrea of Woodstock treasurer and Mr E. V Bodwell of Mt. Elgin secretary

On the 23rd of June 1857 the corner stone was laid by Archibald Burtch. Rev Dr Ryerson, superintendent of Education for Ontario was present and gave one of the addresses

The workmen engaged in the building were billeted with Mr and Mrs. Archibald Burtch

Hard times came to the country during 1857-59 making the collection of pledges towards the building fund a difficult one. Deacon Archibald Burtch who was for some time treasurer mortgaged his own dwelling house in order to carry on the work It was not until the 4th of July 1860 that the school was opened Only one flat of dormitories was finished at that time After a term of six weeks the school closed for the summer vacation and during the vacation Dr Fyfe canvassed for the school and raised nearly enough to finish another flat of dormitories.

It is said of Dr Fyfe that "he was a qualified leader and a man of action with a devotion to duty as he understood it that was absolute and unfaltering He made our educational work the centre of our denominational life." He became the first Principal of the Institute.

The fall term opened with seventy-nine students enrolled, which gave practical proof that such a school was needed and appreciated.

On the morning of the 8th of January 1861 the building was entirely destroyed by fire. This calamity elicited instant sympathy. The citizens of Woodstock at a public meeting decided to place the old Woodstock Hotel at the disposal of the Literary Institute trustees, rent free, and the work of the school was carried on here while the new buildings were being erected. The Hotel furniture was used, for which they paid part of its value.

The Insurance Companies paid over the $8,000.00 insurance which had been placed on the Institute but the trustees were still a few thousand dollars in debt and knew not how they were to finance another building.

But before the end of the week in which the fire occurred, the Hon. William McMaster wrote to Dr. Fyfe offering $4000.00 towards a new building providing that the balance of the sum required could be raised. Responses to the appeals that were made came in rapidly and pledges for over $21,000.00 were secured in a few months. The new edifice was completed by midsummer 1862.

The Oxford and Norfolk Gazeteer of 1867 records as follows: "The Canadian Literary Institute has a site on a rising ground commanding splendid natural views. It is a noble structure (reflecting great credit on its architect David White) of three wings or compartments, surmounted by a handsome Dome . . . with ample playgrounds. This educational establishment is rendered one of the best scholastic institutions in the Western part of the Province.

The Institute is under the control of the Regular Baptist denomination. It has three different departments viz. Primary, Higher and Theological, the average attendance on which consists of fully 100 students. The fees for attendance in Primary and Higher departments vary from $20.00 to $28.00 per year. In the Theological department, attended by about thirty students the tuition is gratis."

Besides Dr. Fyfe the teaching staff in 1860 was composed of Miss Brigham, Miss F. S. Vining who taught for six years, Mr. W. Stewart, and Mr. W. H. Hankinson who stayed until 1867.

For many years there was a constant increase in the number of students attending the Institute and this with the rapid rise in the general educational status of the Province made an enlargement of the staff of instruction a necessity. In 1868 the Rev. John Crawford was appointed in the Theological staff. In 1875 J. C. Yule, a former student of the school and an honor graduate from Toronto University was added also to the Theological department. Prof. Yule only served for two terms before he died. Another son of the Institute Rev. John Torrance was appointed to the vacant professorship. In 1863 Rev. Wm. Stewart retired and was succeeded by James E. Wells as instructor in Classics and Logic. By 1872 the staff had been increased to sixteen.

In 1878 the Institute and the denomination suffered a great loss in the death of Dr. Robert Alexander Fyfe. "He was undoubtedly the greatest organizer and maker of men in Canadian Baptist history." (J. H. Farmer.) Following his death, Prof. Wells was appointed head of the Literary department and Rev. John Torrance was put in charge of the Theological department. "Next to Dr. Fyfe probably Prof. Wells exerted the largest influence in shaping the policy of our educational work."

The Institute also had a Lady Principal, the first Lady Principal be-

ing Mrs. S. T. Cooke appointed in 1861. She was followed by Mrs. J. E. Wells and other women of recognized ability and scholarship. A Ladies building was erected in 1878. When Moulton Ladies College was opened in Toronto in 1888, co-education was discontinued at Woodstock.

In 1881 the Theological department was removed to Toronto and became the Toronto Baptist College on Bloor Street, Hon. Wm. McMaster erecting a building for their accommodation at his own expense.

The Primary and High School Work continued at Woodstock under Rev. Newton Wolverton. In 1883 the name was changed to Woodstock College.

Toronto Baptist College and Woodstock College were united under one Board to be appointed by the denomination, by a University Charter obtained from the Ontario Legislature at its session of 1887.

In 1888 at the Convention in Guelph, it was decided to establish a College, thoroughly equipped for full University work, at Toronto. This was realized through a gift of nearly a million dollars by Senator McMaster and McMaster University was opened in 1890. This Christian University under the control of the Convention of Ontario and Quebec, has been the training school for Baptist leaders, five hundred ministers and missionaries having been trained here for service, while many graduates are leaders in their home churches.

Dr. T. E. Rand followed Rev. John Torrance as Principal of Woodstock College and on his retirement Professor J. H. Farmer became Principal. Dr. Farmer moving to McMaster University, W. E. Huston was appointed Principal and on his death in 1892, Joseph I. Bates became principal. Following Principal Bates were A. L. McCrimmon, A. T. MacNeill, Dr. Thomas Wearing and Ralph Willcock.

As the educational facilities in the Province became more numerous and young people could receive a good education without leaving home, the attendance at the College decreased. As this decrease became more marked the revenue received was not sufficient to carry on an efficient school and large deficits had to be cared for. Efforts were made to increase the registration. The Educational report of 1925 states that "The school has had a fine history, its traditions have been noble, its achievements notable. The staff is capable and loyal. The equipment is excellent." And a plea was made for a larger number of boys from Baptist homes.

Following much careful consideration on the part of the Senate and Board, Woodstock College was closed as at August 31st 1926.

The hope for a practical plan for re-opening and conducting the school did not materialize.

The buildings were rented for a couple of years and then sold.

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PREFACE

It has been said that "The ropes of the past ring the bells of the future" I have tried to make a record of Baptist ropes in Oxford County that, as I see it, are ringing the church bells of today

I have given my main attention to the Baptist Pioneers and to showing the gradual growth of church organizations in the County I have aimed to make a record of when and by whom each church was organized. More detailed accounts of churches are left for local historians

I acknowledge with gratitude the generous co-operation I have received from church clerks and others interested, in supplying me with the needed material and much more that space does not allow me to use The principal sources of Baptist information have been the History of Freewill Baptists by Rev I D Stewart, the Autobiography of David Marks (a striking example of the early evangelist), early Association records the minutes of the first Regular Baptist church in Oxford the valuable documents held by the First Baptist Church of Woodstock and the minutes of various churches.

ZELLA M HOTSON

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CHAPTER I.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE COUNTY

The Treaty of Paris by which Canada was formally ceded to the British Crown was signed on the 10th of February, 1763. At this time there was no permanent settlement west of the Ottawa River, the first survey marking off land divisions for the purpose of settlement being at Kingston in 1783. This was followed by other lots along the St. Lawrence and around Niagara as homesites for the United Empire Loyalists who came in great numbers from the newly independent country called the United States.

In 1791 the Constitutional Act divided Quebec into Upper and Lower Canada, Col. John Graves Simcoe becoming the first Lieut-Governor of the Province of Upper Canada in 1792. Upper Canada was divided into four districts which were now called the Eastern or Johnstown District, the Midland or Kingston District, the Home or Niagara District and the Western or Detroit District and these were again divided into counties in 1792, the nineteen Counties electing the sixteen representatives who formed the first parliament which convened at Niagara on September 17th, 1792.

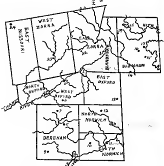
In this first territorial division of land, July 16th, 1792, Norfolk County was one of the Counties organized. Norwich and Dereham townships were included in this County, the description of these townships being "the township of Norwich lies to the east of, and adjoining to, Dereham," and "the township of Dereham lies to the west of, and adjoining to, Norwich." The first surveying in these townships was done in 1799 and the first land granted in each of these townships was in 1800. Norwich was called after the city of Norwich, the metropolis of Norfolk in England, and Dereham was named after Dereham, an ancient English town in Norfolk, England.

Also by this land division York County in the District of Niagara extended west to the river Thames and included Blenheim and Blandford townships as part of its West Riding. Blenheim was described as "lying to the northward of Dundas Street opposite Burford" and Blandford as "a township the most westerly in the West Riding of York County and lies northward of Dundas Street opposite to Oxford and is washed by the river la Tranche (Thames)." Mr. Augustus Jones surveyed a portion of Blenheim and Blandford townships and also of Oxford township in 1793. The township of Blenheim is named after Blenheim situated in the parish of Woodstock and liberty of Oxford, England, where was situated the beautiful house and park bestowed by national gratitude on the Duke of Marlborough for the victory at Blenheim, Bavaria. Blandford is named from the second title of the Duke of Marlborough "Marquis of Blandford" conferred in 1702 and borne by the heir apparent to the Dukedom. A portion of the south west corner of the township of Blandford was set aside by Governor Simcoe for a town site and was for a long time known as the Town Plot. This is the north western part of the present City of Woodstock (north of Dundas Street and west of Riddell Street). The settlement which gradually established here was called Oxford, until about 1830 It was established as the Town of Woodstock in 1833

When Col Simcoe became Lieut. Governor in 1792 he wrote to Thos. Watson in the United States—who had rendered Col Simcoe essential service while he was a prisoner of war in the United States—urging him to come to Canada and bring all his relations and friends with him and he would give them a whole township Mr Watson's son and his cousin Thomas Horner of New Jersey U.S.A. came in the year 1793 Governor Simcoe had the first three concessions of the township of Blenheim surveyed for their accommodation Mr Horner and Mr Watson waited while the survey was being completed and selected a site for a mill, then returned to New Jersey Mr Horner came back as far as Newark (Niagara) where he resided for awhile and then moved to Detroit where he remained until that town was given up by the British Government in June 1796 by the provisions of the Jay Treaty of 1794 Mr Horner then proceeded to Albany N Y where he purchased materials and engaged mechanics to erect a saw mill, bringing them by boat and roughly made sledges to their destination in Blenheim The mill was in working order by the latter part of 1796 but had not been run at all before the dam broke away. From the scarcity of hands it was 1797 before it was rebuilt and the first plank was sawed. This saw mill—on a site just west of Princeton—was the first in the County of Oxford, Mr Horner also erecting the first grist mill in the County Governor Simcoe's successor would not acknowledge his claim to the township of Blenheim allowing him only that land he was entitled to as a squatter which would be 200 acres.

Governor Simcoe had issued a proclamation which offered inducements to settlers from the United States offering a township to those who would provide 40 settlers whose families would become permanent residents The minutes of the Upper Canada Council Chamber Navy Hall March 23rd, 1793 state that a petition signed Gideon Bostwick, Robert Williams, Seth Hamlin, Abel Kelsee and Thomas Ingersoll and numerous associates prayed for a township Thomas Ingersoll appearing in behalf of himself and the above named petitioners The petition was granted giving to Mr Ingersoll and his associates a tract of land of about 64,000 acres. Mr Ingersoll for himself and others, was to select the land With the assistance of his friend Brant, the Chief of the Six Nation Indians assisted by a posse of experienced hunters, he explored the unoccupied lands west of the Grand River He made choice of that section which now comprises the three Oxford townships, then returned to his native town Great Barrington Mass., U S A and prepared to establish a settlement. Two years later with his family he returned to Canada but as there was no road west of Ancaster he remained at Queenston After spending two years on the frontier he pushed westward and after great hardships reached the spot he and his Indian friends had selected for his camp a spot now on Thames Street, Ingersoll and with his own hands felled a huge basswood that marked the site of his new home. Other members of the little band followed enduring privations unknown to those who succeeded them

After Governor Simcoe's removal the Government was not so sympathetic towards settlers from the United States and they withdrew the original allotment from Mr Ingersoll and his little band, although efforts were made to induce the Government to keep faith They were each given a squatter's lot, the dates of patent for these 40 lots running from 1798-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11
SOUTH
NORWICH
9
3
OTTER
RIVER

1. Woodstock
2. Ingersoll
3. Tillsonburg
4. Norwich
5. Beachville
6. Foldens
7. Salford
8. Mt. Elgin
9. Brownsville
10. Springford
11. Otterville
12. Burgessville
13. East Oxford
14. Gobles
15. Richwood
16. Drumbo
17. Wolverton
18. Plattsville
19. Bright
20. Tavistock
21. Innerkip
22. South Zorra
23. Embro
24. East Nissouri

1800 "These worthy men who introduced civilization into this section left many to perpetuate their names and emulate their virtues."

In 1798 Blenheim Blandford and Oxford on the Thames with the townships of Burford, Norwich and Dereham by Act were enacted the County of Oxford which Act did not come into force until Jan 1st, 1800. Oxford County was in the Western District.

Oxford County took its name from Oxford City the Capital of Oxfordshire, an inland County of England having the River Thames for its eastern boundary. Oxford on the Thames (which was later divided North Oxford withdrawing as a separate organization in 1822 and West Oxford in 1842, the name of the remainder becoming East Oxford) took its name from the same source.

The township of Zorra, later divided into East and West Zorra townships, was surveyed in 1820 and was probably given this Spanish word for a name by the Governor Sir Peregrine Maitland. It was added to the County by Act of Parliament in 1821

Nissouri was also surveyed in 1820 and its name is probably Indian, referring to the river, though some think that it is a corruption of "Nigh Zorra" referring to its location It also was added to the County in 1821 and in 1851 was divided into East and West Nissouri townships, West Nissouri becoming a part of Middlesex County.

The County as constituted by Act in 1851 was composed of Blenheim, Blandford East and West Zorra Nissouri, North, West and East Oxford, Dereham and Norwich townships and contains nearly a half million acres of beautifully rolling land. It lies from eight hundred and fifty to ten hundred and fifty feet above sea level

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CHAPTER II.

EARLY CONDITIONS

(As given by W H Landon in historical sketches belonging to Woodstock Baptist Church Elder Landon was the first pupil in Oxford to take advanced studies, which he took under L H Perry He was ordained as a Free Communion Elder in 1828 and spent his life serving the Oxford churches. In 1848 he was appointed the first County Superintendent of Education, which office he held for some years)

With the dawn of settlement and civilization among the dense forests of timber bark covered shanties made their appearance built by the use of the axe alone With not even the sound of another axe within hearing nor a friend within many miles these pioneers were men and women of determination and courage. These very early settlers were nearly all U E Loyalists. Old country emigrants had not yet reached this far inland These first settlers came chiefly from Pennsylvania New Jersey New York and Vermont States and were plain country people, small farmers or the sons of small farmers.

In 1817 the population of the then County had increased to 530 two thirds or three quarters of whom would be in "Oxford on the Thames" township. There were at this time one grist mill and two saw mills but no school, no house of worship and no gaol.

In 1822 there were but four school houses, one each in West, North and East Oxford and one in Blenheim. In the Oxfords the schools were kept open pretty regularly during the winter of each year. In Blenheim not so regularly. West Oxford was fortunate in having a competent school master named McArthur settle among them who worked his farm in summer and taught school in the winter and taught it well. On this account there was an atmosphere of intelligence in West Oxford in advance of the other townships. Later L. H. Perry, a man of good education, who had taken a course of medical studies came from New England and settled in this place and for many years taught the winter school.

"The schools few as they were and distant from each other were the only source of literary knowledge to the public. There was no periodical literature—there were no books. There were but three weeklies in the Province and I think not half a dozen copies came to this county. There was no book store west of Dundas. With two or three exceptions the private libraries were very small."

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CHAPTER III

RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

METHODIST

In 1794 the first quarterly meeting of the Methodist denomination in the Niagara district was held. From here the work spread. Nathan Bangs of Connecticut, U.S.A. who, it is said, was converted at M.E. meetings in the Niagara district, became an itinerating Methodist preacher in September 1801 and as early as 1802 travelled westward into Burford and Oxford townships and introduced Methodism among the early settlers.

The people would be gathered together to hear him by some interested settler who would ride over the trails in the forest and notify the scattered pioneers that there would be preaching in his cabin. Mr. Bangs is reported to have stated at these meetings "I am a Methodist preacher and my manner of worship is to stand while singing, kneel while praying and to stand while preaching to the people who are meanwhile sitting."

These missionary tours resulted in a Methodist Class being held in Blenheim and in Oxford townships.

On August 4th and 5th in 1804 Nathan Bangs attended a quarterly meeting in Oxford which was either organized before or at this time. According to Rev. George I. Van Loon this was the first definite organization of which records are still kept.

We are indebted to Rev. G. I. Van Loon (of the United Church) for the following information also "The war of 1812 gave the work a set back Most of the missionaries were Americans and the whole movement was looked upon as being pro-American The result was that for a while Methodist congregations were prohibited from holding property and Methodist ministers were not allowed to conduct the marriage ceremony Later a chapel was erected by the Methodists in West Oxford township, the deed for the property being dated November 29th, 1828 This deed was registered on February 19th 1824

In 1832 the work was organized as a circuit under the Rev John Bailie. The following churches comprised the circuit—Oxford Chapel Beachville, Ingersoll, 12th Concession Zorra Woodstock North Oxford, Embro Road, Aylmer, Mt Elgin, Dorcham and Salford.

In 1842 the circuit became known as the Woodstock circuit and in 1849 this circuit was divided half becoming the Woodstock circuit and the rest the Ingersoll circuit. In 1854 the old church at West Oxford was torn down and the present building was erected and dedicated."

BAPTIST

In July 1808, Peter Teeple, Simon Mabee Zachariah Burtch Deborah Sales, Abigail Burtch and Elizabeth Scott of Oxford township members of different Baptist churches, met at the home of Brother Peter Teeple and heard a sermon by Elder Fairchild of Townsend These brothers and sisters decided to come under the watch-care of each other.

In September of the same year they formed into a branch of the Baptist church at Townsend and in October 1803 they were organized as a Baptist church.

FRIENDS

During the year 1809 Peter Lossing came from Dutchess County N.Y., and, liking the land opened up in Oxford County, he returned the fall of the same year with his brother in law Peter DeLong and purchased 15,000 acres of Norwich township at fifty cents an acre They then returned to Dutchess county and sold land to those who would settle in Norwich township and so a settlement was started

In 1811 the Lossings settled in a comfortable log house and Peter Lossing being a minister among Friends, established religious services in his house this being the beginning of Friends' meetings in Oxford

Later the membership was such as to warrant the establishment in 1816 of a Preparative meeting and in 1819 the Norwich Monthly Meeting was established, comprising all the meetings of Friends in the Province from here westward This monthly meeting has been held continuously since that time

The original meeting house was built either in 1820 or 1821 on Quaker Street ,Norwich.

PRESBYTERIANS

Rev Dr W T McMullen in an historical sketch stated that "In 1833 the Rev. George Romanes an ordained minister from the Presbytery of Glasgow Scotland visited Canada and preached in Zorra July 21st and reported on his return home that he had found a log church built in which regular sabbath services were held though they had no minister" A replica in stone of this log church near Embro was unveiled in 1932 to com memorate the commencement of Presbyterian church organization in the County in 1832.

Rev G Murray a Presbyterian minister, moved into Blenheim near Princeton about 1831. He gave a site on the south west corner of his farm for a church building and contributed liberally to its erection. This organization would probably be commenced soon after the one in Zorra township.

Roman Catholic

The 100th anniversary of the founding of the Roman Catholic faith in Oxford County was celebrated in Ingersoll on October 8th 1933.

The founding of this faith in 1833 was the result of visits of missionaries to this district.

The first mass to be said in Oxford County was celebrated in James O'Neil's blacksmith shop in the village of Beachville in the spring of 1835 Beachville at that time was larger and of more importance than Ingersoll. Mass was occasionally celebrated here until later when a small church was built.

About 1840 a piece of land was given in Ingersoll by Mr Carnegie (a non Catholic) upon which to build the first Catholic church in Ingersoll

Anglican

Rear Admiral Henry Vansittart, deciding to take up land in Canada in the latter part of the year 1832 sent Capt. Andrew Drew, R.N as his agent to make preliminary arrangements

Capt. Drew purchased considerable land in the east of what is now Woodstock and wishing to bring the town of the future down his way built a brick church on one of his lots. Funds for the building were contributed largely by Admiral Vansittart and his sister Mrs. East and friends in England.

Admiral Vansittart and his family, accompanied by Rev Wm Bettridge arrived from England on the 21st of June 1834 Mr Bettridge became the first Rector of this little Anglican Church which he took over late in the fall of 1834. In 1836 it received its Crown endowment, this being the last endowment granted by the Crown to any church in this Country The Church was consecrated by the Bishop of Quebec and named St. Paul's Church in 1838

The original building is still in use and is considered to be the oldest church building in the County, in which Divine Worship is still carried on.

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Chapter IV.

Early Baptist Families

As it is our purpose to trace the development of the Baptist cause in this county, let us see who were the early Baptist families in this section, many of whom are mentioned in the Pioneer Sketches of Long Point Settlement by E A Owen.

Peter Fairchild and his family came from New Jersey to Norfolk County and settled near Townsend (now Boston) before the surveyor had arrived in that section. It was several years before they had a neighbor. When the Corliss and Beal families (also Baptists) arrived from New Jersey the three families covenanted with each other as a preliminary step towards the organization of a Baptist Church. This was on October 21st, 1804. Meetings were held alternately at their homes. During the visit of missionaries from the United States the church was formally organized on November 9th, 1805 with thirteen members. On the 21st, of October 1806 Peter Fairchild was ordained and installed as pastor of this church, a position he held for fourteen consecutive years.

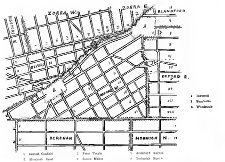
Frederick Mabee was a U.E. Loyalist who had lived in Massachusetts and fled into New Brunswick, where he settled at St. John. In the fall of 1792 Mr. and Mrs. Mabee and family left St. John for Ontario travelling on horseback and driving twelve cows. They had Indian guides through the forest trails and after wintering in Quebec reached Turkey Point, Norfolk County, some time the next year. Frederick Mabee dying soon after moving to Norfolk County, his widow received an U.E. Loyalist grant of six hundred acres of land.

Peter Teeple was a Lieutenant in the British Army during the War of Independence. He was six feet two inches in height with a fine physique. At the close of the war his company was disbanded at Halifax. He married Lydia Mabee, daughter of Frederick Mabee, and came to Norfolk County with her parents in 1793. After the township was surveyed he settled near Forestville. On January 1st 1800 he was made a Justice of the Peace and a Commissioner to administer oaths. These Squires were important persons in these early times. At the first session of the first court held in Norfolk Squire Peter Teeple was one of the sitting Justices.

Titus Finch was also a soldier in the British Army who fought in the War of American Independence and, following the war, was relieved from service at Halifax. He moved into a back settlement in Nova Scotia and while there became ordained as a Baptist minister. Moving to Norfolk County in 1798 he settled on land near Vittoria, Charlotteville township, being given six hundred acres by the Government. He did much missionary work amongst his pioneer neighbors and in 1804 a church was organized. He served this church for over a quarter of a century and made missionary tours to other settlements. On one occasion a small sum of money was raised to send him on a missionary tour up into Oxford. For some years the only salary he received was a black suit of clothes annually. He had five sons and three daughters, several of whom settled in Oxford County. He later became pastor of a church in Oxford.

The Mabees and Peter Teeple became members of this first church in Charlotteville at Vittoria and when a chapel was built in 1807 Peter Teeple became one of the trustees. Soon after this Squire Teeple moved into Oxford and settled on land granted by the Government, being Lot 15 along the river Thames in Oxford township. He became a prominent man in the community. He had three sons and one daughter, Susan, who later married Archibald Burtch.

The second son of Frederick Mabee, Simon Mabee, was born in 1778. In 1799 he married Abigail Gustin and for a time owned the land upon which a portion of the old village of Vittoria is built. He later moved to Oxford County and settled on Lot 13 Concession 2, West Oxford. They


ZORRA W.
ZORRA E.
BLANDFORD
NISSOURI E.
OXFORD N.
OXFORD W.
OXFORD E.
DEREHAM
NORWICH N.
1
3
1 Ingersoll
2 Beachville
3. Woodstock
1 Samuel Canfield
2 Elizabeth Scott
3 Peter Teeple
4 Simon Mabee
5 Archibald Burch
6 Zachariah Burt

had four sons and eight daughters. The descendants of Frederick Mabee are very numerous in Norfolk and Oxford counties.

Zachariah Burtch and family came from New York State about 1798. They settled in Brantford for a short time before moving westward. After remaining for a few days in the Horner Settlement in Blenheim, they made their way into Oxford township and Zachariah Burtch settled on Lot 18 Concession 1 of East Oxford, where he built the first log house in what is now the City of Woodstock. His son Archibald Burtch settled on Lot 18 beside him. This is just south of Dundas Street in the present city of Woodstock, at the east end of the city, the site being marked by an engraved gate post at the present entrance to Lot 18—now the Salvation Army home for boys.

Samuel and Lucy Canfield and their two sons Abraham and Samuel Jr. were members of the party of forty settlers who were granted the township of Oxford on the Thames by Governor Simcoe in 1793. Samuel Canfield Sr. settled on Lot 18 Concession 1 of West Oxford, his son Samuel Jr. taking Lot 29 Concession 1. Abraham was the first settler in what is now East Oxford. Samuel Canfield Sr. died in 1806 and was buried on his own farm. Abraham Canfield later gave the land for the present cemetery at Oxford Centre.

Elizabeth Scott, who also got her deed with the first registration (Dec. 31st, 1798) settled on Lot 18 Con. 8.

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CHAPTER V.

THE FIRST BAPTIST ORGANIZATION

"Oxford July 1808. A number of Baptists, members of different churches, met at the home of Bro. Peter Teeple and had a sermon by Elder Fairchild and chose Elder Fairchild Moderator and Bro. James Corlis from Townsend clerk, which took a seat with us. Brothers and sisters present, Peter Teeple, Simon Mabee, Zachariah Burtch, Deborah Sales, Abigail Burtch and Elizabeth Scott, which wanted to come under the watchcare of each other. Then appeared Abigail Mabee and related her experience and desired to go forward in Baptism, likewise join. A. Mabee came under watch care. Voted to hold Covenant on the second Saturday in every month."

So read the minutes of the earliest Baptist organization in Oxford County, recording not only the loyalty of church members, though far from their home church, and their desire for Christian fellowship and counsel, but also recording the first baptism in the county, that of the wife of Simon Mabee.

On September 24th, the same year, a number of Brethren and Sisters of the Baptist Denomination belonging to different churches, some members of no church but having been baptized, met together with Elder Fair-

child and Elder Kendrick to confer on coming together in church relation or upon some other measure meet for their mutual benefits and for the good of the cause of Christ in the World It was decided that their numbers were too small to compose a well organized church but after some deliberation they chose rather to be formed into a Branch of the Baptist church of Christ in Townsend (Boston), their number now being nine, Samuel and Lucy Canfield joining with the previous seven. This petition was therefore sent to Townsend signed by these nine people

By the following fall this branch church had apparently prospered and strengthened enough to make a separate organization possible and a Council convened on October 5th 1809 with Elder Titus Finch as Moderator and Samuel Burdick, Clerk, the other members of the Council being Elder Peter Fairchild, John Slaght Joseph Merrill, Samuel Canfield, Peter Teeple Zachariah Burtch and Simon Mabee.

"All consented freely to the Articles of the Baptist order and all consented freely to adopt the Articles of the Charlotteville and Townsend churches and all consented to the Practice and Covenant." The Council withdrew and considered upon the matter and mostly agreed to Constitute the church Peter Teeple received the Right hand of Fellowship on behalf of the church. Brothers James and Elisha Harris came forward and offered themselves to this church and were received. Bro Zachariah Burtch was chosen Deacon of the church and Bro James Harris, Clerk

It may be of interest to note the Articles subscribed to by this first Regular Baptist Church in Oxford County.

The Article of the Covenant

We do now in the presence of the Omnipotent God of Elect Angels and men vouch the Lord Jehovah to be our only Lord and Sovereign and give up ourselves to His Service without reservation taking His Holy Word for the Rule of our Conduct and by the Assistence of Divine Grace promising to observe all Commands and Institutions enjoined on us therein as far as we shall understand them that we will as far as Divine Providence permits constantly attend the Publick Worship of God and Ordinances of the Gospel in this Church and extend a Faithful watch over all its members Also in each private relation use our influence to promote Piety and family religion by reading the Scriptures prayer and Christian Conversation submitting to the Laws of Christ in the discipline of His House we promise to abstain from and guard against Covetousness, Defraud, Idleness, foolish Jesting reviling and Evil Speaking with whatsoever is unbecoming the Christian Profession Discarding un-Godliness, Worldly lusts, that we will live soberly seeking the advancement of the Kingdom of God in the general Good, humbly trusting in the Righteousness of our Glorious Redeemer for the Holy Spirit to Sanctify and enable us to persevere in Holiness until the Coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to whom be honor and power Everlasting Amen.

The 12 Articles of Faith—(on Scriptures Creation Fall of Man Plan of Redemption ,etc) include the following—10 We believe that all those who are Chosen by the Father redeemed by the Son and regenerated by the Spirit will finally persevere in faith and holiness unto the end and will be kept by the power of God through faith unto Salvation

The 12 Articles of Practice were as follows

1 Duty to live a life of holiness and unite together to maintain the vis-

ible laws of Christ in the world

2 Church of professed believers

3. Baptism an ordinance for professed believers to be performed by immersion and none ought to be received into the visible church till they have been thus baptized

4. Lord's Supper only for those who have been thus baptized and received into the church.

5 None to administer ordinances except those who have been publickly set apart to preach the Gospel by prayer and laying on of the hands of the presbytery

6 Each individual Church has power and authority from Christ to govern itself

7. The church to approve those members who have public gifts of prayer, exortation or doctrinal

8 First day of week is the Lord's Day or Christian Sabbath and duty of all to assemble themselves together on that Day to Worship God by reading, preaching and hearing His word, together with solemn prayer and thanksgiving and singing of psalms, hymns and Spiritual Songs.

9 Duty of Gospel ministers to give themselves up wholly to the work of the ministry and duty of all church members to communicate of their substance and the church ought to be judge of the ability of each member and deal with them in case of their neglect of this as in other cases of Breach of Covenant.

10. Duty to keep the poor who belong to their community and not to cast them on the mercies of the publick, yet not so as to refuse assistance from the publick funds in case of extreme indigency

11. Duty to live in peaceable subordination to Civil Government and Magistrates and to obey every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake and that they have a right to avail themselves of the Benefits of the Civil Laws for their protection and to obtain redress of grievances but that no church member ought in any ordinary case to sue a Brother in the church at the Law but that all controversies respecting temporal interest ought to be settled by a reference to some of the Brethren of the church or judicious neighbors.

12. No person living in adultery or in practice of any known breach of the laws of God or man ought to be received or indulged in the church. The End

Ten men and nine women signed the Articles of the Church

The first exclusion from this church was two years later for falsehood During the next ten years there are several records of exclusion—for intoxication, for fighting with one of his neighbors on the Lord's day, for accusing another with guilt and refusing to give any proof and he likewise having joined the free masons, for lying, for adultery, for refusing to travel with the church, for railing against the church and minister, and for joining finity with the world in plays and sham marrying On Aug 14th 1819 Nancy Brink was excluded for leaving the travel* of the church and breach of Covenant and joining the Methodist Class Several of these excluded persons were reinstated.

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*This word is used in nearly all early minute books and appears to refer to the church's journey heavenwards.

The minutes also refer to differences among its members which were brought before the church and there settled by vote of the members. Once the difference was over a handkerchief, once a piece of cloth, once over a bargain concerning some rope and once a family difficulty was brought before the church. The Brother acknowledged he had boxed his wife's ears after receiving several blows from her with a handspike. The church demanded a publick acknowledgment from both. The Brother refusing was excluded from fellowship and the sister was given one month in which to answer the requirement.

The members of the church also received attention as we read, "Voted that the members living within ten miles of the church's appointments are not to miss more than three Covenant meetings without being inquired after." Also "Voted that in Covenant each member is not to wait the female for the male but all to speak as the spirit moves them."

In July 1812 Simon Mabee was given "from toleration from the church of Christ in Oxford to improve his gifts wherever the Lord in His providence may call him." And on October 4th 1817 a Council consisting of Elder John Upfold from Clinton (Beamsville) Church, Deacon Samuel Smith from Charlotteville Church and Bro. John Slaght from Townsend Church convened with the Oxford Church for the purpose of ordaining Simon Mabee to the work of the Gospel.

"After solemn prayer to Almighty God for His blessing and direction in this important business before us we proceeded to business.

1st. Bro. Mabee related the work of God's grace on his soul, also his call into the ministry.

2ly. Asked the candidate a number of questions on Gospel doctrines and proceeded.

3ly. Called on the Church to know if they were unanimous in calling Brother Mabee to ordination. Deacon Zachariah Burtch answered for the whole in the affirmative.

4ly. Retired and after mature deliberation on the business before us, we unanimously agreed that it was proper to ordain Bro. Mabee but as the Counsel is small we recommend it to the church to postpone the ordination until more help can be obtained."

A few days later Charles Lahatt a missionary from the Northern Baptist Missionary Society in the State of New York and also from the foreign and domestic missionary society in the City of New York, arriving in the community in his missionary capacity and being informed of the decision of the recent ordination Council, ordained Bro. Mabee in the presence of the church and a numerous congregation.

After his ordination Mr. Mabee was pastor of this Oxford church for some years. "He did not enjoy the advantages of education but he closely studied the Bible and was a plain, faithful and affectionate preacher." (Wm. Rees). "He was well known as a strong and aggressive minister." (Fitch) In the latter period of his life he travelled extensively in Western Ontario, preaching and baptizing. Nearly one thousand people were baptized by him and many churches were established and enlarged. He died at his home in Oxford, January 3rd 1843. His children all became members of the Baptist Church.

In 1819 the church was divided into three divisions: East the Governor's Road to Deacon Trees, the River Settlement to Deacon Tims and the South Settlement of Oxford to Deacon Kings. Apparently services were held in these different sections, either at homes of members or in school houses. Services are mentioned at the school house near Bro Tree on the Governor's Road, at the school house near Bro Harris, at the school house near Brother Jeremiah Finch and at the school house near Bro. Cross

Darius Cross came from Bennington N Y State and the minutes give us the following information, "April 26th 1820 Voted to send a letter to the Brethren at Bennington State of New York respecting a letter for Bro Cross." In July following "Voted that Bro Darius Cross shall have liberty to improve his gifts in public, where God in His providence may call him" On the 26th of July 1821 a letter was sent to Bennington informing them that 'We have retracted the step we took in receiving Mr Darius Cross as a member of this church. We assure you brethren that we have not done this in consequence of any dissatisfaction in his conduct, for we believe him to be a real penitent and his conduct has been such as to gain the esteem of both church and society, but we have done it under the consideration that the step was illegal and had a tendency to disturb the peace of Zion ' The church however almost immediately voted to retrace the steps taken about Bro. Cross and to receive him back if Bennington church would again give him a letter Apparently he had not come from a Regular Baptist Church

Besides Darius Cross, Bro Nicholas French and Bro James Harris were given in 1820 the liberty to improve their gifts in public.

In the early twenties this Baptist work was influenced and disrupted by Baptist missionaries from the United States. In order to understand this influence on the Baptist cause in Oxford, of which few records remain let us go back to the early days in New England and trace the story as we get it from Rev I. D Stewart (who wrote a History of Freewill Baptists) and other Baptist historians.

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CHAPTER VI.

FREEWILL AND FREE COMMUNION BAPTISTS.

The early settlers of New England in exiling themselves in America regarded it as their right and duty to protect themselves and children from all error, and this led to a belief in the necessity of uniformity of public worship though this prevented religious freedom. It also led to the connection of church and state This connection resulted in legal suppression of all who differed from the legal church—which was congregational, in compulsory support of churches and ministors, this being collected the same as other taxes, and in worldly and not always converted ministers, who were led into the ministry because of the salary and the great influence a minister had in the community

Some Baptist churches were started with difficulty These Baptist churches, called Calvinistic ,as well as the Congregational churches, all believed in predestination and that God ordains whatsoever comes to pass.

There was no salvation for all. The will of man was not free to choose the way of life, as nothing could be done until God moved.

In protest to these conditions and doctrines the Free will Baptists came into being as a denomination. They had no desire to form a separate Baptist denomination and for many years their records show simply the name Baptist Church. Their first ministers had all been members of the Baptist denomination and they still claimed to be Baptists but the Calvinistic Baptists refused to fellowship them. The name of Freewill was objected to for many years "being given them by predestination brethren because they taught that the free grace of God gives power to every sinner to change his will and conform it to the Gospel" (Marks). They believed not only in free will, but also in free salvation and free communion.

Other groups of Baptists were formed also during these times, as the Free Baptists, the Free Communion Baptists, and the Open Communion Baptists. These were all somewhat similar to the Freewill Baptists being protests against prevailing doctrines.

The first Freewill church was organized in 1780 at New Durham, New Hampshire with Benjamin Randall as Pastor. By the close of the year there were five free churches. The polity of these Baptists was gradually developed as their increasing numbers and changing circumstances required. After three and one half years the early churches united in a Quarterly meeting and received the counsel, co-operation and support of each other. After eight and one half years more, owing to the increasing number of churches, Quarterly meetings were established in different localities and to these the local churches reported. A Yearly Meeting which held an annual session in four different places, received reports from these Quarterly Meetings. Some years later a General Conference was established, composed of delegates from the (now) seven Yearly Meetings. The first General Conference convened in October 1827.

Nearly all the ministers toured as evangelists, living on donations received as they went along. As they travelled through the sparsely settled Eastern States, small groups would be converted and be organized as a church. Sometimes a group would be found holding similar beliefs to the Freewills and it would be invited to join with them.

In this way missionary Elders from Vermont State came over into Lower Canada and organized churches at Hatley and at Stanstead in 1802. Rev. Asa McGray, who came from Maine State, started the Barrington church in Nova Scotia in 1816 or 17. Missionaries from Maine also started work in New Brunswick, a church being organized at Hodgdon in 1829.

In Upper Canada a man named Andrew Banghart of Westminster Tp. in Middlesex County becoming converted began to exhort his neighbors until 40 or 50 had joined with him. Some of these had heard of Christians in New York State with beliefs similar to theirs and Banghart was sent to get in touch with them. He was unsuccessful but he was sent a second time and found Freewill Baptists who baptized him and ordained him before he returned. Soon afterwards Rev. Herman Jenkins, a Freewill minister came over to this district to visit these Baptists. He found a church of twenty members in Westminster and another one in Dunwich Tp.—Elgin Co.

Several years before this Thomas Huckins with two or three families of Free will Baptists removed from New Hampshire and Lower Canada into this section of Dunwich. For some years they enjoyed religious privi leges with other denominations but not finding with them the liberty which they wished to enjoy, about eight persons for several months had held separate conference meetings and were called Freewill Baptists

These two churches joined with a New York State Quarterly Meeting in 1821. Thomas Huckins commenced preaching and afterwards moving to London, a church was organized there and also joined the Quarterly Meeting in 1827 Thomas Huckins was ordained at London in June 1828, the first Freewill Baptist ordination in Upper Canada.

ELDER DAVID MARKS

Freewill Baptists called their ministers Elders (Page 31 Treatise on the Faith of Freewill Baptists, 1868 edition) and they performed the duties of pastors, teachers and evangelists. However J D Stewart uses both the prefix Eld (page 52 Eld. Daniel Hubbard) and Rev (page 65 Rev Daniel Hibbard—1782) Men were given a licence to preach by a local church and if desirable, were ordained later by a council. Sometimes Ruling Elders as well as Deacons were appointed in local churches. Often these were ordained to the ministry if the need arose for more ministers (Stewart's History pages 55 and 65). This appears to be an early custom.

Free Communion Baptists also called their ministers Elders.

A great evangelist for these times was born on Nov 4th 1805 at Shendaken, Ulster Co. New York State and named David Marks The family moved to Junius N.Y. where he spent his boyhood. His parents were both members of a Calvinistic Baptist Church. Often his mother took him to her room and told him that she had consecrated him to God and was assured that he would be converted early and would plead with him to give his heart at once to the Saviour He says in his diary "At the age of four years a sense of death and judgment filled me with awful feelings At the age of nine I was generally careless of eternal things, yet frequently I would resolve never more to engage in idle sports." When nearly eleven years old his life was much endangered by a fall from a horse which so affected him that he made oath unto God that he would like Daniel, kneel and pray thrice in a day the rest of his life, even though he might not be 'elected' for salvation

Eighteen months after this he first spoke in a Conference meeting of the Calvinistic Baptist church, where his parents were members. A few weeks later he asked to be baptized and though accepted for baptism he was not baptized even though he renewed his request twice afterwards. Six months later he again requested baptism and the subject was this time discussed and his views concerning election and communion were asked for He told them he was in doubt whether their views were agreeable to the scriptures and they voted not to receive him. He was then aged 13 and all this was a trial to his Christian faith. But his oath to God was diligently kept and his faith and trust were strengthened He attended meetings of different denominations particularly the Methodists Then in July 1819 some Freewill Baptists having heard about him, came thirty miles to see him and he finding that their views were the same as his, was baptized and joined their church

When 15 years old he felt God was calling him to preach the Gospel and warn the wicked of their danger and in April 1821, aged 15 he definitely left home to labor in the Lord's vineyard and walking from place to place he spoke wherever he stopped, often at Methodist gatherings or Free Communion conferences, as well as on the street and at Freewill gatherings.

His parents being poor, he had only received a meagre education but twice he refused offers of financial help towards an education as he believed his life would be short and it would take time from his duty of declaring the glad tidings of salvation However he studied with considerable success as he travelled around Often large crowds came out to hear "the boy" preach and from preaching in the open air he developed great strength of voice His diary says he often spoke six hours in a day and seldom became weary in the effort.

He was usually given free board and lodging wherever he stopped and maybe received 50 cents or a dollar from some interested listener He was often tired and hungry and cold but his needs were always met and he gained in influence as a preacher and later as a leader in the denomination As the continual walking from town to town took up so much time he was sometimes loaned a horse and was later assisted in procuring a horse and waggon The waggon often served as a pulpit for his open air addresses and the horse in a little over five years carried him 19 thousand miles.

David Marks in his travels crossed the Niagara into Canada for the first time in the fall of 1822, spending a few days in the Niagara district. In Oct 1827 he made his first trip to London district to visit the three Freewill Baptist churches He crossed at Lewiston and came by way of Hamilton Ancaster, Brantford Oxford and London He was accompanied by Freeborn W Straight of Ontario New York State After six weeks Mr. Marks returned to the United States but made several return journeys all over the same route In Sept 1829 he married Marilla Turner, the eldest daughter of Captain Daniel Turner who had moved to Zorra, Oxford County from Vermont State Mrs Marks was well educated and accompanied her husband on his journeys.

Mr Straight remained in Elgin County for some months, going over to New York State to be ordained and again returning to Elgin County He married a girl from Dunwich Tp Elgin

Elder Jenkins who had been the first Freewill minister to visit the London District, also made several return visits.

These ministers addressed gatherings in Oxford County whenever in the neighborhood Dr Perry whose house is the oldest still standing in Woodstock and is occupied by descendents of Dr Perry had a room called the minister's bedroom which was a sacred place. Many missionaries and ministers of all denominations stayed here welcome guests while in the community The family have in their possession reminiscenses of some of these men Elder Jenkins always carried a stocking in which he placed donations received as he travelled around The stocking was never hidden as he felt there was no necessity for that. Elder Marks is called a very, very dignified and sober man who would have been shocked at a funny story Dr Perry named a son and a daughter after David Marks and his wife Marilla

However I think Mr Marks had a sense of humor On one of his tours through Upper Canada he arrived at Ancaster a little before sunset and 'wishing to warn the wicked of this village and having but a few minutes to stop I gave notice for preaching in seven minutes on the green opposite the meeting house When the time had expired two persons were present and I asked them to give me a text. They gave me 'Nothing' Soon after prayer 70 or 80 people assembled and taking my text I proceeded to show first that God created the world out of *nothing* secondly that man was placed under a law in which there was *nothing* unjust, thirdly that there is *nothing* to justify the impenitent transgressor, fourthly that there will be *nothing* to comfort him in death—*nothing* to save him in judgment or to give him hope in hell; fifthly that the righteous have by nature *nothing* meritorious, *nothing* of their own of which they can boast, *nothing* to fear in death, and that in the judgment day they will have *nothing* to cause them grief and in heaven *nothing* to disturb their peace and finally that in time and in eternity *nothing* will turn to the advantage of the wicked or to the disadvantage of the righteous." On returning to Ancaster about three weeks later he preached to about 100 people on "Something"

ELDER THOMAS TALLMAN

In the fall of 1821 Elder Thomas Tallman of New York State came into Oxford and settled his son on land in Zorra. It became known that he was a minister and he was pressed to preach. He was gifted with great natural eloquence and had an earnest and fervid manner when speaking and was affable and genial to meet. "Upon once consenting to preach it was impossible for him to withdraw. Whole settlements came out to hear and half his hearers would follow him to the next settlement to hear him again." Elder Tallman was pastor of the First Free Communion Baptist church of Worchester., Sharon and Cobuskill, State of New York.

Elder David Marks, who as an evangelist often spoke to Free Communion gatherings makes the following record in his journal. "In the early part of January 1827 I held meetings with several churches of the Free Communion Baptists. This denomination is distinct from the Freewill Baptists. The principal difference is that many of the Free Communion Baptists believe in what is called the final perseverance of the saints. It is thought, however that more then one half of the denomination exactly agree with the Freewill Baptists. Another difference is they have a small number of 'Articles' abstract from the scriptures. Their churches are situated mostly in New York and principally within one hundred miles west of Albany. Their exact number I cannot state, but probably they had in 1827 about forty churches and three thousand members. Not far from this time their annual conference was divided into two called the Northern and Southern conferences. The great western turnpike is the dividing line between them. I am of the opinion that if the Free Communion Baptists and the Freewill Baptists should become acquainted with each other they might become one people."

At the time that Elder Tallman came into Oxford there were only three church organizations in the County. The Methodists had their organization in West Oxford township, the Friends and their settlement and regular services around Norwich and the Regular Baptists had their organization in Oxford township. It is stated that Elder Tallman would have been willing to work with Elder Mabee of the Regular Baptist Church and so strengthen the cause that then existed but Elder Mabee, not agreeing with all of Elder Tallman's religious views, thought it his duty to denounce him and to warn the people against him.

Elder Tallman returned to his home in New York State before winter and returned in the spring duly authorized to constitute and organize churches 'wherever God in His Providence might lead him.' The *First Free Communion Baptist church* in the Town of Oxford (now the City of Woodstock) was organized on April 22nd, 1822 at the log school house on the corner of what is now Dundas and Chapel Streets. Nineteen of the twenty-one charter members had been members of the Regular Baptist

church and yet others transferred later. It is interesting to notice some of these.

Eli Harris and his family of eight sons and three daughters moved into Oxford township where Eli Harris died in 1813. His sons James and Elisha and afterwards others of his family joined the Regular Baptist church in Oxford township where James became clerk and was made a lay preacher. Two months after the Free Communion church was organized we find that James Harris preached for them and was then received into their fellowship and granted a license to improve his gifts, June 1822. On the 31st of the following October we find that "a council was held at the house of David Curtis (who had also transferred from the Regular Baptist church) for the purpose of ordaining Darius Cross and James Harris." Six sons of Eli Harris became ministers though not all of them in the Baptist Denomination.

Darius Cross left the Regular Baptist church of Oxford township to become a charter member of the Free Communion church and after his ordination in the fall he with Elder Harris, Elder Jacob Goble and Elder Tallman, were the early Free Communion preachers and organizers in the County.

Zachariah Burtch apparently always remained a member of the Oxford township Regular Baptist church. His youngest daughter, Esther, married Dr. L. H. Perry and they were prominent workers in the Free Communion church for many years. It was their home which was such a welcome stopping place for all touring evangelists.

Archibald Burtch, son of Zachariah Burtch, married Squire Teeple's daughter who died in 1824 leaving him with five small children. His second wife was Miss Jane Blow. Jane Blow, with her family, had come from Philadelphia in Oct. 1820 travelling by team and covered waggon. They arrived in Oxford with just seven dollars left but traded one horse for three cows. They lived the first winter in a little building 12 feet square on the Burtch farm. Jane Blow worked for Mrs. Burtch and received in pay two lbs. of maple sugar for each day's work. Afterwards she worked for Luddingtons and took her pay in home made flannel and linen cloth. She was baptized by Elder Cross and joined the church in Blenheim, a branch of the Woodstock church. Archibald Burtch was baptized in 1824 and joined the Woodstock church. He was a few months later appointed a deacon of this church. Few people were more influential in the early Woodstock church than Deacon Burtch and his wife. He donated the land on which the college was built and when it was in difficulties he mortgaged his farm to assist in building it. Church meetings were often held at their home or large gatherings in their barn.

We get this description of early church meetings of the Free Communion Baptists from W. B. Landon. "This Free Communion church set aside one day in every month to acknowledge their covenant. For a period of 40 years these monthly week day meetings were held more or less regularly and failure to confess orally to the covenant and Articles of faith at these meetings resulted in exclusion from the church. A member might be absent on the sabbath without exciting remarks, but if one absented himself from the Saturday covenant meeting he must have a good excuse or he would fall under censure. The covenant meeting was conducted as follows. The minister if present, or otherwise the senior deacon, conducted the devotional exercises, after which the church clerk read the Articles of

Faith and all who acknowledged the Articles were required to manifest it by rising. The Articles of Covenant were then read and all were required to speak to their Covenant. Not much secular business was transacted at these sacred meetings. The manner of conducting public worship differed much from the present practice. The introductory services consisted of a hymn, a prayer and a second hymn by the minister. Elder Tallman, I think, read the scriptures but Elder Harris and Elder Cross seldom or never. Then followed the sermon, after which the brethren and sisters had liberty to improve their gifts as it was called, and this was regarded not only as a right but as an imperative duty and it was not unusual for every church member present to rise and address the audience under a conscientious sense of duty. The privilege and duty were considered so sacred by the masses, that he would have been a bold man who would venture to propose even a modification of it. The people had to be taught cautiously that the Spirit had not conferred the same gifts upon all men and all women and it took years for the church to comprehend this truth. These customs and usages to which I have alluded were by no means peculiar to this church, but were common to all other churches in the country and in the neighboring states, at least in rural districts, including the Methodist as well as the several sections of the Baptist Denomination."

Thus church in the Town of Oxford was called the Oxford Church.

EXPANSION

Not only were meetings held in the Oxford Church but, in order to preach the Gospel to all whom they could reach, visits were made into different sections of the County, wherever it was possible to get a few persons together, and Branch churches were started.

The first of these was in Blenheim Township at the house of Joseph Smith near Horner's Creek, eight being baptized and a church of thirteen members being organized on October 13th 1822. Jacob Goble was elected Deacon and Bro. Slaughson Clark.

During the year 1823 Elders Tallman, Cross and Harris made frequent visits to the south Norwich settlement and in February 1824 the brethren there asked to be set apart as a Branch. At the June Conference of the Free Communion Baptist Association of Upper Canada, which was held at Deacon Archibald Burtch's in East Oxford the following June, they presented a petition asking to be set apart as a church. This petition was granted and the hand of fellowship given by Moderator Elder Goble. Some of the early members here were Hosea Heath, Oren Wright, Martin Hicks Jr., Asapel Oatman and Christopher G. Otis, all in South Norwich in the vicinity of Springford.

A branch of the Oxford Church was organized across the river in Zorra in June 1825, Alpheus Taft being elected Deacon and Darius Cross clerk. Meetings were held here at the Taft school house. E. Cody and wife, M. Cody and E. McQuain were baptized in this district.

Another branch of the Oxford Church was formed in the Rowell settlement in Zorra on Dec. 3rd 1830. The early members here include Stratten Rowell and his wife, who had been baptized in 1826, and Joseph and Keziah Brown, Nelson and Anna Brown and Charles Flowers, all of whom had been baptized in 1829. Stratten Rowell built a neat frame chapel on his property on the 16th Line of East Zorra, chiefly at his own expense, and services were held here every two weeks or once a month according to circumstances. Covenant meetings were held monthly. On Sundays following the Covenant meetings, the Lord's supper was observed and Mr and Mrs Rowell entertained all who had come long distances through the woods.

At first the membership of these Branch churches in Zorra were included in the Oxford church. Then in the early thirties about thirty-five members were dismissed to the 1st. and 2nd. Zorra churches.

The Brethren at Harris Street made a request to the Oxford church, on the 10th of December 1831 to be set off as a separate cause to be called "The Second Branch of Oxford Church."

A church organized in Southwold township, Elgin County, joined with the others in forming an Association to which they sent delegates. At other points—in Westminster and Lobo townships in Middlesex County and Dunwich and Malahide townships in Elgin County—those converted became members of the Oxford Church and these little colonies were visited once every few months. Only in the most favored localities was there preaching as often as every other Sabbath. "It was very difficult, owing to this scattered state, to maintain these minor institutions." Landon.

As we have stated, an Association of these Free Communion churches was formed immediately following the organizing of the separate churches. At the Association in 1825 four churches reported as follows: Blenheim 37 members, Southwold 15, Oxford 79 and Norwich 15, a total of 146.

In 1828 W. H. Landon was ordained an Elder and in June 1832 Brother Wolverton was ordained after the Annual Conference, and these afterwards gave much of their time and talent to preaching. These early ministers received no definite salary, each having his own occupation as well as preaching.

Efforts Towards Union of Free Will and Free Communion Churches.

When Elder Marks made his first journey through Oxford in 1827 he consented to preach and went to the house of Elder James Harris where he addressed a meeting in the evening and the next day held two meetings. On the Sabbath he preached three sermons in Blenheim.

In 1829 an effort was made to effect a union of the Free Communion and the Free Will Baptist Churches in Upper Canada. There were at this time in Western Ontario three Freewill and four Free Communion churches, far removed from others of kindred faith. Elders Marks and Straight attended the Eighth Annual Free Communion Baptist Conference of Upper Canada which was held at the house of Deacon Bartch, being appointed to labour to effect a union. It was agreed to refer the proposed union to the churches who should send delegates with instructions to a conference, which should meet at Oxford two weeks later. The conference met according to appointment and was composed of Marks, Straight, Huckins and five laymen on the one side and Harris, Smith, Goble, and eleven laymen on the other. "After a full discussion it was decided: First, that we find only one difference in theory between the two denominations, namely whereas the Freewill Baptist maintain that a saint, in this state of probation may lose that grace and that character which constitute him such, and thus finally perish, the Free Communion Baptists generally maintain the reverse. Secondly, we find but one difference in practice, namely, that the Free Communion Baptists have a few 'written Articles of faith' ab stract from the scriptures while the Freewill Baptists acknowledge no standard but the Bible Thirdly agreed that we do not think these differences to be of sufficient importance to warrant propriety in our maintaining separate visibility Fourthly agreed that we hold a friendly correspondence with each other baptize break bread and ordain with each other as occasion may require, also that we assist each other in church labors etc with the same freedom, as though we were but one denomination." These 'Resolves' were presented to the Free Will Yearly Meeting in New York State and approved Elder James Harris of the Free Communion church at Woodstock being present.

These advances seem to have been initiated by Elder Marks and the Freewill Baptists. However at the Free Communion Baptist General Conference at Ames, Montgomery County New York State on September 8th, 1841 composed of 58 churches 32 churches reported in favor of union with the Free Will churches, 13 were opposed and 13 made no report. Three delegates were appointed to the Free Will General Conference, who were instructed to present a request for the admission of their churches to membership with that body This was presented to the General Conference on October 6th 1841 and it was granted unanimously Their churches were mostly in the vicinity of Utica their membership being about 2500

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Chapter VII

Regular Baptist Expansion

Now let us return to the Regular Baptist Church organization in Oxford township What a catastrophe it must have seemed to lose nineteen members all at one time, with more following as the months went by We read of members being excluded for embracing as we conceive erroneous principles' and of others labored with to no purpose and finally excluded for joining the Free Communion church One member gave as her reason for leaving the church that the church held to close communion and unconditioned election

But the church continued to take in members These members were in widely scattered districts, coming from all of the townships of South Oxford and from Zorra and Nissouri townships in North Oxford.

The church called a Council in January 1823 to ordain Nicholas French The Council examined him on January 25th and ordained him on January 26th The seventeen members of the Council who came from outside points include the following Elders—Charlotteville—Elder Finch, Bayham Elder Jos. Merrill, Westminster Elder Slate (Slaght?), Southwold, Elder Reuben Crandall, Elder Crandall was chosen Moderator

Three times in 1826 delegates from this church were appointed to attend ordination Councils—June at Southwold to ordain Wm McDermand, July at Arlborough to ordain Dugal Campbell and in Sept at Townsend to ordain John Harris

Groups in the various settlements now commenced to consider separate organizations

David Churchill and family had moved into South Zorra and joined with the Oxford Church Mary and Benjamin Vandecar from the same community were baptized in 1825 Meetings were held in this section at the home of Deacon Fitch and on the 4th of March 1826 a Council met and after deliberation agreed to set off the Brethren in Zorra as a church in sister relation Elder Mabee gave the right hand of Fellowship and Elder French gave the charge to the church The church chose David Churchill as Deacon and Joseph Fitch as Clerk and consisted of eleven men and six women This church carried on for some time and then lapsed, being reorganized again and joining the Grand River Assn in 1849 with a membership of 23 Winchell Vandecar was Clerk from 1851 to 1861 when the church ceased reporting and apparently discontinued Pastors who served here besides Elder Simon Mabee and Elder Nicholas French were Elder Titus Finch (1831) and Elder Isaac Elliott (1849).

Jared and Salmon Vining sons of Rev. Ebenezer Vining whose labours were mostly in Massachusetts and New York States came to Canada in 1822 and settled in Nissouri An autobiography of Rev T. E. Brown an old local Methodist preacher and pioneer of East Nissouri gives us the following information "A few years after the Vinings settled in Nissouri two missionaries, Elders Mabee and French were sent to labour in Nissouri by the Christian ladies of the Baptist church in Oxford who, having no money, paid them with coats socks and other home made clothing The labours of these missionaries were not in vain for the Word was blessed and many were awakened and converted and among them the Vinings A Baptist Church was formed in the Vining neighborhood and these brothers were leading spirits in it. The elder brother Jared became the Deacon and Salmon became the minister" The records of our First Baptist Church show that on June 17th 1827 Jared Vining told the travel of his mind and was baptized and later in the summer Salmon Charlotte and Mariah Vining were also baptized A Council from the Charlotteville, Townsend and Zorra churches met with the 1st Oxford Church on the 4th Friday in May 1828 for the purpose of organizing a church in Nissouri We have no record here of the ordination of Salmon Vining which according to their family records took place in a new barn on his own farm "Dissensions among leading brethren led to the downfall of this first organization" which was reorganized in 1858 as the West Nissouri Baptist Church which is now in the Middlesex Association.

At a meeting in Norwich township on May 17th 1821 Jonathan Emeigh and Hiram Sprague told their experiences, were baptized and received the right hand of Fellowship into the First Oxford Church. Sarah Sprague later became a member also

In December 1828 the Norwich township brethren voted against forming a separate organization and requested that they might remain in the old church organization Jonathan Emeigh was appointed a Deacon

On March 25th 1837 a Council including Elders John Harris from 1st. Townsend, Simon Mabee from 1st Oxford and J. Woodward from 1st Norwich, organized the Second Church in Norwich with nineteen charter members In January 1848 it was decided to erect a meeting house and apparently three families members of the church gave land on which to build a Chapel, as three rows of lots in the adjoining cemetery were re-served for the exclusive use of the families of Emeigh Dennis and Snyder The first building erected bears the date 1849 and is now used as a shed on the old Snyder farm The present building was built in 1870 and dedicated in January 1871 Dr Fyfe of Woodstock being the special speaker The first pastor of the church was Elder Isaac Elliott who came from Ingersoll on horseback once a month and served the church for a year for 60 bushels of wheat About 1867 the name of the church was changed to '*Burgessville*' Baptist Church.

In 1858 Rev Wm. Haviland the pastor of Burgessville held evangelistic meetings in the town hall at *Otterville* Following the special meetings a church was organized with Rev Wm Haviland as pastor Stephen Delong and Silas Slaght as Deacons and Edmund Titus as Clerk This church was received into the association in 1858. In the year 1865 a site was procured and a church building erected At that time the cause at Otterville was maintained in connection with the Springford Church and remained with it until 1874 when the church was reorganized, eighteen members from Springford uniting with the newly organized church at Otterville About the year 1882 services were suspended for a time owing to being unable to support a pastor alone. In 1883 the Mt. Elgin church then working with Springford united with Salford and Otterville and Springford united as a field The church prospered and the church building was veneered with red brick a basement was put in and it was otherwise improved.

During the Convention Controversy of 1928 the membership of this church divided. That section which joined the Union of Regular Baptists, augmented by a number from the Springford church, gained possession of the Church Building

The Sprague Settlement being named after the first settler Hiram Sprague was on the east side of East Oxford township Hiram Sprague built a large house about the centre of his large farm and they were noted for their hospitality being ever the friends of new settlers arriving in the district. Mr Sprague used to walk through the bush to attend church services of the West Oxford Church. When the Second Norwich (Burgessville) church was organized he became a member there As the district became more settled church services were often held at a school house near his farm. Later he gave an acre of ground on the north west corner of his property Con 8 East Oxford, for a chapel other settlers furnishing timber and other material and all helping with the work On July 11th 1859 a Council convened and formed a Branch of the Burgessville church here with Hiram H Sprague as Deacon This remained a Branch church until May 2nd 1862 when it became recognized as an independent church to be known as the *East Oxford* Baptist Church. It was received into the Association this year There were 59 charter members Elder H Haviland, who was the pastor of the Burgessville church, became the first pastor of this East Oxford church The church continued to co operate with Burgessville until May 3rd 1887 when it united with Crestville church This union was terminated after six years, the church re uniting with Burgessville with which church they still co-operate

A pastor of the Burgessville and East Oxford churches, Rev H Woodward was instrumental in organizing a church in the village of *Norwich* and resigned his pastorate to become the first pastor of the Norwich church. Norwich church was organized with sixteen members, living in the town and vicinity, on June 14th 1884. The two bodies of

Methodists in Norwich having united leaving one church vacant, the Baptist people bought this building and have continued to worship in it. A recognition Council of the Association was held in the church on November 9th 1884

During the pastorate of Rev W. L. Newton (1894-1901) Norwich dismissed sixteen members to form a Baptist church at *Hatchley*. They afterwards built a small church there and for a considerable number of years carried on the Norwich pastor preaching there each Sunday afternoon They ceased to function some years since

On the 22nd of November 1828 the First Oxford church called a Council from Westminster Charlotteville, Southwold Zorra Missouri, and Townsend and organized a new church called the *Second Church in Oxford.* This apparently was the Harris Street church a few miles south of Ingersoll A Chapel was built here and church services carried on for some years. There was a cemetery on the property The bodies of Eli Harris and others who had been buried on his farm were removed to this cemetery

The Harris family and others had divided on religious beliefs, some remaining with the First Oxford township church and some joining the First Free Communion Baptist Church of Oxford at Woodstock We have noted that on the 10th of December 1821 'the Brethren at Harris Street made a request to the Oxford Church (Woodstock) to be set off as a separate cause to be called "The Second Branch of Oxford Church' This organization evidently met in the Harris Street Chapel also as it is reported by descendants of these pioneers that one organization would padlock the door of the Chapel against the use of the other organization when feeling was high

The records of the Second Church in Oxford have disappeared, but we find in the minutes of the First Oxford Church that Nicholas French was pastor there in 1834 This church requested admission into the Association in 1848 but their case was laid over and in 1849 the Association resolved not to receive them. Before this time the Free Communion Association in Oxford had lapsed and the members were joining elsewhere. Some of the members of the Free Communion Branch Church at Harris Street may have joined with the Regular Baptist Church there and this may have been the reason for the cautiousness of the Association, However they are reported in 1850 and in 1851 they reported a membership of 37, Isaiah W. Elliott being Clerk and Elder Freeman pastor Elder Wm Freeman was also pastor of the 1st Oxford Church In 1857 the report of the committee appointed by the Association the previous year to visit the Second Regular Baptist Church in Oxford was received It was moved and carried that this church be dropped from the minutes of the Association and that the committee who have reported advise the members to unite with some other church. During 1857 at least fourteen members of the late Second Oxford Church were received into the First Oxford Church membership this First Oxford Church holding meetings in the Harris Street Chapel as well as in their own Chapel.

Four years after the organizing of this Second Church in Oxford eighteen of its members became the Charter members of the First Regular Baptist Church of Christ in Norwich which was organized at the "old block school house" on Mr Kellett's farm just a little west of the village of Springford in 1832 The Council which set them apart as a church was composed of Elders and members from the First Oxford, Second Oxford, Zorra, Norwich and Blenheim churches. Elder Nicholas French was the first pastor here from 1832-37. For the first ten years after organization their meetings were held in the school house, their own Chapel in Springford being opened in 1842. In 1858 a more commodious house of worship was built and about thirty years later the present church edifice was erected. Dr. Castle of Toronto was the preacher at the dedicatory services. A parsonage was purchased in 1881.

The First Oxford Church, the mother of these numerous churches in South Oxford, also prospered. Elder Mabee was the pastor for some years. In 1820 a committee was appointed to take up subscriptions to pay Elder Mabee for his labours in the Gospel. Elder Titus Finch was pastor in 1828. In April 1829 "employed Elder Mabee to serve as pastor for one year from this date for which he is to receive forty dollars payable in grain, wheat, rye or corn at the going price in Oxford at the expiration of the time. The grain is to be delivered at Jeremiah Finches. Elder Mabee is to hold regular meetings within the limits of the church and not be absent unless leaving someone to fulfill his appointments." Two months later "Voted that Elder Finch take half of the time and prospects with Elder Mabee." In 1831 Simon Mabee was chosen pastor of the First Oxford Church and Elder Titus Finch as pastor of the Zorra church. At this time there were over sixty members of the Oxford church. Later in the year it was voted that each male member shall pay for the expense of the church, one shilling each year, on the first day of January. In 1833 employed Elder Isaac Elliott for one year as pastor, who was to be paid once a month for visiting them. There were many baptized and joined the church in 1832. In 1835 and during 1841 forty two were received.

In February 1841 Elder Mabee offered to give the church one and one half acres of land on the ridge near the four corners (Pipers Corners) on Lot No. 13 in the 2nd Concession of Oxford West, on the North-east corner of said Lot, for a meeting house and burying ground. The church accepted the land and agreed unanimously to build on it and appointed Elder Mabee to be their agent to solicit donations and subscriptions to the building fund. One would gather that the reason no building had been erected before this was because of the scattered membership, who came from eight different townships. In the early years of the organization it would be more satisfactory to meet in school houses or homes in the different localities, but when the townships were able to organize churches it was more satisfactory to the membership in West Oxford to have their own building. Elder Mabee did not long enjoy this church home as he died in January 1843.

Later pastors of this West Oxford Church were: 1844 Elder Fred Howay, 1845 Elder Eastwood, 1851 Elder Wm. Freeman, 1858 Elder George Wilson. Elder Wilson was employed at a salary of $600.00.

In September 1859 Elder George Wilson visited some friends at Mt. Elgin and sent around word that he would preach in the brick school house one mile south of Mt. Elgin for two evenings. Such interest was shown that he continued to preach week-day evenings for about two months. During this time about 45 were baptized and joined with the First Oxford Church, forming a branch of that church. At a meeting in September 1861 in Mr. Miles' shop arrangements were begun to organize the Mt. Elgin branch as a separate church, Mr. Wilson still being the pastor. After being dismissed by the First Oxford Church they met November

11th 1861 and organized as the Mt. Elgin Baptist Church with a membership of fifty. They were received into the Grand River South Association in 1862. Rev. I. Elliott was pastor here in 1864 and Rev. J. Torrance in 1865.

Many were baptized also in the *Beachville* district by Elder George Wilson and in 1861 the members in this locality organized as a Branch of the West Oxford Church with Elder Wilson as pastor. A frame church was built in 1861 and bricked in later. In September 1866 a Council was called to recognize them as an independent church. They were received into the Association in 1867.

"On the 20th of July 1861 the Providence of God seemed to have directed Rev. George Wilson to East Nissouri, where he preached by invitation. The Word was blessed, many were hopefully converted and a considerable number baptized on a profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus." These are the minutes which open the records of the *East Nissouri* Baptist Church.

A Council was called to recognize the church of nearly forty members as a Regular Baptist Church. Rev. George Wilson would not be able to give a great deal of time to this new church and the minutes of July 7th 1862 record "That as Elder Vining had kindly offered to come and preach occasionally, that we invite him forthwith." Rev. S. Jones of the Mission Church at St. Marys took charge of this field also, the beginning of 1863. In October 1864 Elder James Lines formerly a minister of the Free Will Baptist Church in Zorra was received as a member of the church and did some preaching.

In a little book called "Incidents in the Life of S.H. Mitchell, St. Marys" written by himself, he writes "As I was returning from the Ingersoll market in the year 1872 when five miles from St. Marys, in the township of Nissouri I passed a Baptist meeting house. A Baptist church had been organized in the neighborhood about twelve years previous, but the members had become cold and dead spiritually. The house was locked up. It stood on posts and as there was no fence surrounding it, a large flock of sheep had taken possession of the basement. As I rode on I felt sad and said in my heart 'O Lord these sheep seem to be wiser than thy people'." The result was that he organized a Sunday School and aroused the people to his aid. The work flourished under his leadership from 1872-76. From 1876-81 students served the church. Soon after this the East and West Nissouri churches united as a field. In 1926 the church edifice was rebuilt.

In 1881 some of the members of the Beachville church, wishing for a church home nearer than Beachville, organized a church in *West Oxford at Foldens*. The church building which is still in use was built by Mr. Bent, one of the members and a splendid workman, assisted by Mr. Davis, another member.

About 1860 Rev. George Wilson started preaching in *Embro*. In February 1862 the Embro members became a Branch of the West Oxford church with Rev. Wilson as pastor and reporting through the West Oxford church. During this year they built a church edifice at a cost of $700.00. During 1863 Rev. Wilson preached at Embro on alternate Sundays as well as having charge of the West Oxford church. He maybe preached at Beachville on the other Sundays, as it was also a Branch at this time. On February 13th, 1865 the members from Embro (all who had paid their liabilities to the West Oxford church) were dismissed to form an independent church. Rev W C Beardsall was pastor of this church in 1867. The Baptist cause never got very strong in this Scotch Presbyterian centre and services were discontinued sometime during the next ten years The church building was removed about 1880 and later the Presbyterians erected sheds on the grounds.

About 1825 Wm. Barker of Coventry England migrated to Canada and settled in the township of Dereham taking up nine hundred acres all in one block and in 1832 his family of eight or nine children followed and settled on this land After they were settled Mr Barker senior moved to *Ingersoll*, was converted and decided that he should tell the gospel message to his fellowmen. About 1837 at his own expense for material and labour, he built a small circular building immediately at the rear of his own home on Thames street north He supplied his own seating bibles and hymn books and did the preaching This was an independent Baptist cause and was continued from 1837 or 38 until the death of Mr. Barker The pewter communion set of two trays, a large tankard and two large goblets used here also the pastor's bible and hymn book are kept by descendants.

Rev W. C Beardsall of East Zorra became pastor of a church in *Ingersoll* in the fifties. In 1857 they erected a brick building on Albert street off King at a cost of $1000.00 capable of seating 450. This organization was recognized in 1858 and received into the Grand River South Association in 1859 with a membership of 24

The membership of the West Oxford church in 1859 was 191 and in 1863 was 235 Services were held at the Chapel at Piper's Corners and at the Chapel on Harris street and sometimes at the Town Hall in Ingersoll In May 1859 it was voted to have the Association in the Harris street Chapel on Friday and Saturday and on Sabbath in Daniel Harris grove if fine and if not fine in the Town Hall at Ingersoll The Association was held here in June Covenant meetings were held at Mt Elgin Embro and Beachville as well as the other chapels as long as these remained Branch churches.

The Baptist organization which had built a chapel on Albert street Ingersoll was opposed very strongly to the Piper's Corners organization holding meetings in Ingersoll In May 1859 a committee of five from the West Oxford church at Piper's Corners were appointed to try and form a union with Elder Beardsall's church on lines that could be agreed on The union was not formed and on April 20th 1861 the West Oxford church considered whether they would withdraw from Ingersoll as the Albert street church had sent them word that they would not confer with them as long as they held meetings in Ingersoll. On October 10th 1861 the West Oxford church went on record by a motion that they wished to be united with the Ingersoll church as one body and again appointed a committee to confer with them but the Albert street church would accept no offers of reconciliation while the West Oxford church held any meetings in Ingersoll In November the matter was taken to Dr Fyfe and Elder Stewart of Woodstock who afterwards conferred with the Albert street church and later advised the West Oxford church to build a chapel in Ingersoll In 1864 a brick building was built on Thames street south in the Town of Ingersoll at a cost of $4000.00 The first services in the new chapel were held on September 9th 1864 and it was decided to hold services there morning and evening. Rev. Thos. Baldwin had become pastor of the church following the resignation of Rev. George Wilson. On January 22nd 1867 it was resolved that the name "Regular Baptist Church of West Oxford" be changed to *"Thames Street Baptist Church, Ingersoll."* The Albert street church never became very strong numerically, the membership in 1868 being reported as 20. But Rev. W. C. Beardsall was a valued worker in the Association, serving as clerk and also on numerous committees. There are no reports from this organization after 1868 and it evidently disbanded. In November 1870 Rev. W. C. Beardsall united with the Thames Street church, where he afterwards became clerk and a very active worker. With the building of the new church in Ingersoll services were discontinued at Harris street and at Piper's Corners. The old building at Harris street was removed about 1868. A committee undertook to look after "the graveyard of the Second Baptist Church of West Oxford" and it is in a very well kept condition with a permanent upkeep fund. The church building at Piper's Corners was sold to Mr. David French. The broken headstones from the small cemetery started by the church are said to be placed in the foundation of Mr. French's barn.

On December 28th, 1853 a few Baptist members met in *Tillsonburg* to take into consideration the propriety of forming themselves into a Regular Baptist church, Deacon Thomas Robinson in the chair. A church of 17 members was organized and it was decided to call a Council to recognize them as a Regular Baptist body. This Council convened at the school house, Tillsonburg on the 12th of February 1854, Rev. Ephraim Smith of the 1st. Norwich church being chosen Moderator and Elder Fitch of Blenheim preaching the recognition sermon. Elder T. Rouse of Bayham gave the right hand of fellowship to the church which became a member of the Grand River Association. Silas Slaght was clerk of this newly formed church and Thomas Robinson and Silas Slaght the deacons. In 1858 the church was reorganized with but eleven members, only two of whom were members of the first organization. The preaching services here, which were held in the old Temperance Hall, were irregular until 1865 when this church joined with the Mt. Elgin church under Rev. John Torrance. In 1875 revival services were held for several weeks by Rev. George and Mrs. Needham and two years later evangelistic services were again held under Rev. Robert Cameron of Brantford. These greatly strengthened the church. The church worshipped in a small frame building which had been purchased from the Methodist church in 1873. In 1894 the present brick building was built and dedicated and in 1919 the large Sunday School wing was added.

CHAPTER VIII

NORTH OXFORD ORGANIZATION

While this church organization was being carried out in South Oxford the Baptists had also been organizing in North Oxford.

Enos Wolverton, who was born in New York State, came to Canada about 1818. He settled in Blenheim township and the settlement which he started here was named Wolverton in 1848. Mr. Wolverton joined with the Free Communion Baptists either at Woodstock or in Blenheim as he was ordained by them following their June Association in 1832.

Rev. Jacob Goble came from New York State to Canada in 1811 and settled in the first Concession of Blenheim about 1818 being the first deacon of the Blenheim Free Communion Church which was organized in October 1822. He was chosen Moderator of the Free Communion Baptist Association of Upper Canada in 1825 and was an active leader and preacher. Some years later his son Wm. L. Goble became a storekeeper and postmaster, the post office being named Gobles after him.

The Ruperts came into Blenheim township about 1826 from New Brunswick and Henry Rupert's daughter dying about 1828 he gave a plot of ground for a cemetery and his brother in law Frederick Burnett gave the adjacent land for a church. This church was organized as a Regular Baptist church about 1828 and was called the *First Blenheim* Baptist Church being near Richwood in Blenheim township. Later it became known as the *Riverside* Regular Baptist church.

Sometime during the thirties or forties Enos Wolverton joined with this church.

Elder David Currey, an ordained Baptist minister, came from Lewiston, New York State about 1850 and settled near Wolverton in Blenheim. His sons David and Samuel bought the saw mill in Wolverton and James and George bought the gristmill. These mills burned in 1872 and then these four men went farming. Many from these families joined the First Blenheim Regular Baptist Church.

Also many Dawsons were members including Thomas, Elizabeth, George W. and Jane. The earliest clerk known was Joshua Burnett who was followed by John Maynard. Stocktons were also prominent in the work here.

Apparently the Riverside Church held meetings in different sections of the township and just how early little chapels were built we do not know as the early minutes of this church got burned but we have record of buildings in Wolverton and in the Western part of the township (between Drumbo and Windfall) in 1853. Monthly covenant meetings were held in the Wolverton meeting house and one would expect also in the meeting house at Windfall.

In 1844 there was a *Second Blenheim Church*, with Rev. Heman Fitch as pastor, which worked with Esquesing. It was at this church that the new Association was formed in 1845. Whether this church was at Windfall or in the Goble settlement I do not know. It apparently lapsed

On December 28th 1853 a Council met in the new meeting house at Windfall according to appointment to organize the *Second Baptist church in Blenheim*. The charter members of this church were members of the First Blenheim Church (Riverside), who lived nearer this meeting house, and included many Curreys and Griffiths. Isaac Griffith became the first clerk and was followed a year or two later by G N Currey. One of the Curreys became the first Deacon and Elder Wm Haviland of the Riverside church also became pastor here. This church was received into the Association in 1854 and reported a membership of 62. In 1856 the membership was 77. On January 7th 1855 the property (being part of Lot Number 17 in the 7th Concession of Blenheim) was deeded to the Second Regular Baptist Church in Blenheim for a church and burying ground, by Jeremiah Malcolm and his wife Elizabeth for the sum of £12.

The fall of 1856 there was some discussion in the Riverside church about building a new meeting house in Drumbo. Some time during the next two or three years it was decided to move the building of the Second Blenheim church into Drumbo, a distance of two miles. This was attempted but the roof fell in, so a frame church was built in 1858 where the Drumbo rink now stands, at a cost of $1000.00 and became known as the *Drumbo church*. The Association met here in 1860 and again in 1864. This building was sold to George Law when the new brick church was built in 1876, a short distance from the first site. A parsonage was purchased in 1922. The property between Drumbo and Windfall belonging to the Second Blenheim church is now the Drumbo cemetery, being deeded to the Cemetery Board by Wm. Pinkham and David Maynard of the said Baptist church.

In May 1857 the members of the First Blenheim church (Riverside) in the Wolverton district organized as a branch and services and baptisms are recorded there but their membership remained with the First Blenheim church until January 14th 1871 when twenty six members received their letters to form a church at *Wolverton*. In 1862 a frame church building was erected at Wolverton, at a cost of $600.00. The lumber for the building was cut in Currey's saw mill, the work being done largely by volunteer labor. G N Currey, Enos Wolverton and G W Dawson were the first trustees of the property, which was given by David Currey and his wife Hannah. The recognition Council met on February 7th 1871 and organized the church. Geo N Currey and George W Dawson were the first deacons. George N. Currey was the first clerk and served eight years being succeeded by A. Wolverton who served in this capacity forty six years. The first pastor was Rev. Theopholis Booker.

Early pastors of the First Blenheim church of whom we have any record were Elder Heman Fitch Sr who was here in 1834. Rev Francis Pickle who died while here and is buried in the Riverside cemetery. Rev. John Bray, 1849. Elder David Currey 1854-5, Elder Geo Patten 1856-61, Elder Heman P Fitch Jr 1861-64. Rev Christopher Ferrin 1864-67.

In May 1887 Wolverton (still a branch church with membership in the Riverside church) Drumbo and the Riverside churches united as a field with Rev. George Wilson as pastor. In 1888 Rev T Booker became pastor and remained for several years. On March 4th 1873 "a meeting was called to determine which is best viz. to repair or rebuild church and continue worship or to dissolve and unite with sister churches. The gradual falling off of membership and attendance is noted, caused by removals and a grow ing inclination among the masses in favor of village churches. People are willing to go farther to secure better accommodation and with more inducements such as singing". Some were 'willing to stick to the ship if it can float'. The membership was 96 but a large proportion "were quite unable to do anything towards support of the church." The decision which was finally reached was 'That whereas several of our most prominent members have removed from our midst and others being contiguous to either the Drumbo or Wolverton churches and further considering the inconvenient situation of the church, we after prayerful consideration think it would not tend to the interests of the body to incur the expense necessary in repairing or rebuilding the church and though sincerely regretting the circumstances which compel us to take the step, yet we think it conducive to our best interests to dissolve and unite so far as possible with sister Baptist churches.' May 4th 1874. Quite a number had taken letters but there being "still quite a number like sheep without a shepherd" it was resolved to maintain the visibility of the church and keep our place in the Association, praying that the Good Shepherd will deign to bless our feeble efforts in building up his spiritual church.' They secured Rev. H. Fitch as pastor and services were held that summer and maybe some the next year when the minutes are discontinued, the last record being on October 2nd, 1875.

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CHAPTER IX.

FREE WILL BAPTIST ORGANIZATION

In 1841 the Free Communion denomination joined the Free Will denomination and during the forties and fifties Free Will Evangelists came over from the United States and became very aggressive in Oxford County.

The Woodstock Free Communion church had gradually been drawing towards the Regular Baptist view point but there were those in its membership who differed. The Woodstock branch churches were two in Zorra township, and one each in Blenheim, Oxford and South Norwich townships.

In these smaller churches it was not possible to obtain ordained preachers except every two or three weeks and travelling evangelists were made welcome.

Elder Jacob Goble of Blenheim, Elder Reuben Crandall and Elder Darius Cross were the most frequent preachers in Blenheim and Zorra. Elder Marks, whose wife was from Zorra township, preached several times in 1830 in Oxford, Zorra and Norwich townships. In 1832 he spent ten days and preached twelve sermons in different neighborhoods around Zorra. Other Free Will evangelists including Elder Starr also preached in Mr. Rowell's Chapel on the 16th line of Zorra and introduced their own ideas of church doctrine and polity which were adopted by Mr. Rowell and most of the members. Two brothers, both Free Will Evangelists, moved into the county about this time. Their names were Jacob and Stephen Griffin and they were very zealous in spreading Free Will sentiments and starting Free Will causes in the county

Several families of Regular Baptists moved into Zorra at this time and settled a few miles north of the Rowell Chapel They came from near Peterboro where they had been members of the Colony Line Baptist Church north of Peterboro, under the pastoral care of Rev J Gilmour These families attended Mr Rowell's chapel, but, being strong in their convictions of church faith and polity and naturally associating together, refused to unite with them They finally withdrew and held services of their own In 1849 Rev J Gilmour of Peterboro visited these former members of his church and also Mr and Mrs Francis Malcolm, who had been members of his church in Aberdeen Scotland and who had settled in this neighborhood Mr Gilmour advised these Baptists to organize a Baptist church and build a meeting house for themselves and he contributed sixty dollars (a munificent sum in these days) towards the expense of building Mr Malcolm gave one acre of land on the south west corner of his Lot (number 15) on the 16th Line for the church, and he and his four sons, just growing into young manhood also did most of the work of building the meeting house, being assisted by the other members The neat frame building was opened for public service June 1850 Rev J Gilmour kindly coming from Peterboro to conduct the service The church of eleven members was named the *East Zorra 16th Line* Baptist church Francis Malcolm and James Lockhart were the first deacons There was no settled pastor for some years, the pulpit being supplied by Rev W C Beardsall (who had settled in East Zorra north of the church) Rev Edward Topping of Woodstock Rev Walter Milne of the Queen's Bush Watson Robinson a member of the church or Rev W H Landon.

Rev Mr Landon became the first settled pastor in 1852 followed by Rev E Topping In 1857 Rev John Gerrie preached a few times and was unanimously requested to become pastor He was paid $200 per year in cash and this was supplemented by contributions of household supplies food for his horse, firewood etc For several years the church provided all his firewood by means of wood bees. He served here for eleven years. Mr and Mrs Gerrie are buried in the Innerkip cemetery.

A school teacher with Christadelphian views coming into the neighborhood, many in the community adopted Christadelphian doctrines The sons of Francis Malcolm became leading Christadelphians and discussions and dissension in the church led to a split in March 1859, the church becoming nearly equally divided between the two parties. For two years the Christadelphians held the chapel the Baptists obtaining possession again in 1861 The church joined the Grand River South Association in 1868. It transferred to the Brant Association in 1871 and again in 1883 to the Woodstock Association. A white brick church was built during 1877 Services were carried on here until 1927 when, owing to the small membership and need of repairs, the organization disbanded and joined elsewhere

In the spring of 1863 Rev Mr Gerrie assisted by Rev W Milne held three weeks of special services Amongst the converts at this time was George Baird of Bright who afterwards built a Baptist chapel at *Bright* and a church was organized in 1868 Rev J Gerrie acting as pastor there also. This church joined the Grand River North Association and carried on for a number of years. The Baird family moving away, it weakened and finally discontinued

The Free Will Baptists continued to meet in the Rowell chapel for a time Then on the second day of September 1849 a church was organized at the white school house on the 12th Line of East Zorra (tollgate) named *"The First Free Baptist church of East Zorra."* Elder Stephen Griffin conducted the organizing and gave the right hand of fellowship to the thirty members Stratten Rowell and Samuel Tree were appointed deacons and Wm R Brown clerk. At the first covenant meeting eighty two spoke and nearly one hundred partook of the first commemoration of the Lord's Supper by the church.

Apparently all those for miles around believing in Free Will doctrines joined this church, as the membership included the Rowells and others from the 18th Line organization, the Browns from the 18th Line, Levi H Perry and Abigail Burtch from the Oxford Church, Woodstock, and the Trees from the 12th Line Services were held in the tollgate school house on the 12th Lane.

In 1851 because of the size of the field, they commenced to hold services alternately in the 12th Line school house and in Brown's school house on the 18th Line.

In February 1854 land was purchased on the south east corner of Lot No. 11 in the 16th Concession (17th Line) by trustees of a Free Will Baptist church members of the First Free Baptist church of East Zorra. A chapel was erected and services were held here until sometime in the eighties In 1890 or 91 the chapel was sold and moved to Innerkip where it became the C.O.F Hall.

On February 26th 1858 the *Second Free Will Baptist Church of East Zorra* was organized under the superintendence of Rev Jacob Griffin. Four were duly acknowledged as members five were added the next day and by the end of the year the membership was 22 Land was purchased and a chapel was erected on Lot 28 in the 11th Concession being on the sideroad two miles north of the present village of Hickson. During the fifty five years that this church functioned nearly two hundred people were baptized and joined the church.

In Blenheim township the Free Communion Branch church which was organized in 1822 with Rev Jacob Goble as Deacon would have his continuous care as well as help from visiting ministers. The same supply often preached at both the Blenheim church and at the Rowell chapel Apparently Blenheim had no church building, the meetings being held in the Gobles school house In the summer of 1846 Rev W C Beardsall of East Zorra became pastor of the Blenheim and Zorra churches, preaching regularly every two weeks at each church for nearly three years.

In 1839 a family named Kennedy settled in South Blenheim near Richwood. Being Free Will Baptists they were instrumental, with the aid of the Griffin brothers in organizing a Free Will church in the early forties In 1850 Elder Stephen Griffin being pastor, they built a rough cast meeting house at *Richwood* at a cost of $1000. Meetings were held here until they gradually discontinued about 1870 The church building was sold a little before 1900 and the sheds in 1900 A cemetery had been started in connection with the church and the property is now the Richwood cemetery

Pastors of the Riverside (1st Blenheim) Regular Baptist church preached in the Gobles school house in the fifties Any Free Communion

Baptists here who had become Free Will Baptists would have joined the Richwood church.

In 1863 a branch of the Drumbo Regular Baptist church was formed at Gobles Corners and in May 1868 a Regular Baptist church called the *Gobles Corners Church* was organized with Jasper G. Goble as clerk and his father Wm. L. Goble (a son of Elder Jacob Goble) as Deacon. Mr. Richard Kipp gave land for a church building and a white brick building was erected in 1878. This building later burned down and was rebuilt on the same site and reopened in 1893 as the *Creditville Baptist church.* The work discontinued here about 1925, the remaining members joining neighboring churches and the building being sold in the spring of 1929.

In Oxford township the Free Communion Branch church had apparently used the Harris Street Chapel when the regular Baptists were not needing it. The Free Will evangelists gathered together a nucleus for a church here and organized a church in *Salford* about 1850. Elder Stephen Griffin, Elder George Dennocker and Rev. Henry Blackmar all served this church. It later joined with the Regular Baptists being reorganized and recognized as a Regular Baptist church on March 28th 1877. Rev. J. Dempsey was the Moderator and Rev. C. Goodspeed clerk of the council. Rev. R. J. Lobb was the first pastor of this church of fifty-one members.

A Free Will Baptist organization was also formed at *Sweaburg* which united with the Methodists and Presbyterians in building a Union Meeting House each organization electing one trustee to the property and each having equal privileges in the use of the building. An agreement to this effect was drawn up in 1865 and registered in the registry office at Woodstock. Of these three church groups only the Methodists survived and the organization now belongs to the United Church of Canada.

In South Norwich the Free Communion church sent delegates regularly to the Free Communion Baptist Association. In 1882 the membership is reported as 32. Elder Ephraim Smith was pastor at this time. We have no record of any Free Will organization having been formed in this neighborhood.

A Free Will church was erected in *Woodstock* in 1863 at the corner of Peel and Reeve streets. Rev. W. H. Trowbridge was the pastor here in 1862-63. Nothing is known of the activities of this church or just when it disbanded.

In East Zorra the First Free Baptist church got into difficulties in 1861 over evidence which one of its members (an ordained Elder and travelling preacher) gave at a law-suit and which was considered "unchristianable". He refused to acknowledge the charge made against him by the church and was considered expelled. He appealed to the Quarterly Meeting and they asked the church to reconsider his case. In March 1862 at a meeting of the church, the motion to reconsider the case from the beginning was lost. The May meeting of the Oxford Quarterly Meeting turned the church out of the Association. In June the church voted on disbanding, the vote being a tie. They concluded to canvas the church on the subject. As there are no more minutes the organization evidently didn't revive.

However later a new organization was formed in this district as the *South Zorra Free Will church*. This organization, or the former one, had meetings in a Hall on the east side of the 13th Line on Lot 6. In 1870 a white brick church was built on Lot 7 in the 12th Concession (13th Line). Rev. Robert Martin was their first pastor and during his pastorate the church was built. In 1878 under Rev. Thos. MacElroy they commenced working with the Second Free Baptist church of East Zorre (12th Line.) In 1887 the 12th Line church commenced working with the 16th Line Regular Baptist Church and the 12th Line church joined with Tavistock Regular Baptist church in forming a field. The 12th Line church finally disbanded and the church was sold in 1917. The grounds are still held as a pioneer cemetery.

The South Zorra church withdrew from the 16th Line church in 1928 and joined the Union of Regular Baptists and in 1931 withdrew from this Union and joined the Independent Fellowship of Baptist churches.

Early Free Will ministers whose names appear as serving these Oxford churches are: Jacob Griffin, Stephen Griffin, George Denecker, Michael Doyle, Stephen Tree, Wm. H. Trowbridge, L. S. Parmerlee, Henry Blackmar, Robert Martin, Thos. MacElroy, Chas. Clark, George Moore, Mr. Webster and C. W. Lane.

Oxford churches held a quarterly meeting and they belonged to a Free Will Association which took in Iona, Middlemas, Round Plains, London, Bloomsburg, Townsend Centre and Brock, where fellowship, prayer and testimony meetings are reported as being held.

It is stated that in 1853 there were 32 Free Will Baptist Churches in Canada, one half of which were west of Toronto.

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CHAPTER X.

LATER ORGANIZATIONS

About 1872 a sabbath school was commenced in the west end of Woodstock by the Oxford church of Woodstock and was carried on successfully, the meetings being held on Dundas Street West.

On June 18th 1873 the Young People's Christian Association in connection with the church reported that they proposed to buy a lot to establish a sabbath school in the West end and asked the liberty to have the deed made to the trustees of the church, which request was granted. A lot was procured on the corner of Hunter street and Vansittart Ave. and in the spring of 1876 the building was erected. Preaching services were held here at 6.30 P.M.

But this location on Vansittart Ave. did not prove a wise choice. "During the years the services were held on Dundas Street West, the attendance at the sabbath school was large and the occasional preaching by the students was well attended and a deep interest felt."

But the Mission on Vansittart Ave. went down and was finally discontinued. On April 13th 1881 an offer of $300 for the property was accepted. Brethren Wolverton and McLaurin of the Oxford Church always felt that it was wrong to give up the west end school and agitated resuming and trying to recover the lost opportunity, this time by starting a church for the convenience of the west end members. "Persistent plead-ing at length got the members interested. Lots were purchased at the corner of Hunter and Oxford streets for the sum of $1400.00 and a brick building capable of seating three hundred persons was erected. Forty two members of the Oxford Church were granted letters in October 1880 in order that they might organize. The organizing meeting was held on Nov 7th, Dr E W Dadson being chairman and W J Chave secretary of the meeting. The church chose the name *The Oxford Street Baptist Church.*

A farewell social was held in the parent church to give expression to the good wishes of those who remained to those who formed the new church. About forty more took their letters to the Oxford St. Church during the first year

Recognition services were held at the church on the 29th of December 1880 the church joining the Woodstock Association of the Ontario and Quebec Convention

In 1928 during the Convention controversy, they withdrew and joined the Union of Regular Baptists and in July 1931 when this Union divided they became members of the Independent Fellowship of Baptist churches

On November the 19th 1880 following the organizing of the Oxford Street Baptist church, the Oxford Church changed its name to "*The First Baptist Church*"

On January 14th 1877 a sabbath school was organized in the east end of Woodstock by the Oxford (First) Church. In 1885 a lot was purchased on Centre Street and in 1886 a building was erected. This East End Mission is still carried on by the First Church.

In January 1875 Rev C Goodspeed of the Woodstock church baptized seven candidates at Strathallan on the 12th Line of East Zorra. On February 5th the Woodstock church granted letters to the members, for the purpose of forming a church at *Strathallan*. This church was organized on February 9th 1875. Services were carried on in a frame chapel for about ten years but the cause never got very strong here and the work was discontinued. For most of the ten years this church and the East Zorra 16th Line church united as a field.

During the pastorate of Rev J D McColl at the Drumbo Church the Needham Brothers (Thomas William and Ben) were procured as evangelists. They also held services at Plattsville. Following these special services, on January 30th 1880, a church of fourteen members was organized at the home of Mr James Greenfield, *Plattsville*. Ten of these members received letters of dismission from the Drumbo church in order to organize in Plattsville. Rev J D McColl of Drumbo became the pastor and assisted in the organization. James Greenfield and Charles Baird were elected the first Deacons and James Baird the first clerk and Treasurer. Archibald Baird was the first candidate for baptism being baptized in the Drumbo church by Rev J D McColl. Later baptisms were usually in the river Nith. Twelve members were added to the church the first year. Recognition services were held in the Plattsville Town Hall on the 25th of February 1880 and the following third of June the church was received into the Brant Association at their gathering in the village of Onondaga. During recent years they were an Independent Baptist cause and they have now disbanded.

In 1879 Rev J B Moore was called to the pastorate of the Tillsonburg Church and he was induced to take up an appointment at Brownsville. It was not long before the Brownsville members of the Tillsonburg church applied for dismission for the purpose of organizing at Brownsville. The church was organized on January 28th 1880 with thirteen members. In February plans were started towards building a House of Worship. This building was erected and paid for that fall and dedicated on November 14th 1880, Professor Terrance being the speaker.

A Council convened at Brownsville on May 25th 1880 and duly recognized the organization as a Regular Baptist Church. Brownsville worked with Tillsonburg church under the same pastor until 1894, when they withdrew and engaged a pastor as a separate cause.

In 1928 they withdrew from the Convention of Ontario and Quebec and joined the Union of Regular Baptists.

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CHAPTER XI

CO-OPERATION

The early Baptist churches in Ontario being in widely separated districts knew but little of each other. These early Baptists in Oxford had come mostly from the United States and their intercourse and fellowship were with the States. But the early eastern Ontario Baptists mostly came from and had their fellowship with Great Britain. Efforts were repeatedly made towards co-operation among the Baptists of the Province, strong convictions and a strong feeling of independence making progress towards union slow. Early churches in Eastern Ontario were all open, communionists but they gradually drew toward the strict communion practice. Baptists of Western Ontario were perhaps about equally divided on communion during the first quarter century, the drift being towards strict communion. (Fitch)

A three day conference was held at Townsend in 1818 called the Clinton Baptist Conference. Only four churches—Clinton, Charlotteville, Townsend and Oxford (township)—being represented. Elder Titus Finch and Elder Fairchild were present, Deacon Zachariah Burtch being the representative from the First Oxford Church. At this conference there was organized "The Upper Canada Domestic Missionary Society for the sending of the Gospel to the destitute of this Province," which was the first co-operative Missionary effort on the part of Baptists of the province. (Schutt) In December 1826 the Oxford Church appointed a committee of seven to act in the Missionary Society in Oxford.

In 1819 the Oxford Church joined with others in forming the Western Association at Charlotteville. Later it joined the Grand River Association which was formed soon after this. In 1820 delegates from Oxford (township) church were appointed to attend the Conference at Malahide, these delegates being Elder S. Mabee and Brothers Darius Cross, Nicholas French and Zachariah Burtch. In June 1824 they appointed delegates to the Association. In 1830 delegates were appointed to the Upper Canada Association. In June 1833 the Oxford church voted "to accept as care the Articles that the Association formed in 1832 and recommended to the churches."

An Association of the Free Communion Churches of Upper Canada had been formed immediately following the organizing of the separate churches. An effort was made in 1829 to form a union between these churches and the Free Will churches around London, which belonged to an Association of churches in New York State. All these churches were far from others of similar faith but no union was formed.

From the Baptist Historical Year Book of 1900 we learn that in the summer of 1837 a deputation from the Eastern Association (Niagara District) and a committee of the open communionists (I think Free Communionists would be more correct) of which Elder Landon (of the Oxford Free Communion church, Woodstock) was a leading member, decided to call a convention of all the Baptist churches in the Province to be held at Townsend the third week in October for the promotion of brotherly unity and co-operation in missionary and publication work. The committee of open communionists agreed "that the best interests of the cause in general, and the Baptist denomination in particular, require that a union should be effected, in so far at least as that the efforts of the two bodies may be united in the cause of God and the benevolent enterprises of the day." The committee had learned from the deputation "with the liveliest satisfaction that the difference in our respective practice with regard to the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is all that at this moment prevents the most perfect union." The committee recommended that three successive Monday evenings immediately preceding the convention "be solemnly set apart by every church in the Province for special prayer to Almighty God for heavenly wisdom to direct his servants at said Convention." The Convention assembled. "All were agreed that it were desirable to cast away all names by which parties among us are designated and unitedly to adopt the simple name of Baptists."

Elder Landon and Deacon A. Burtch were appointed delegates to this convention by the Woodstock church and apparently Woodstock church joined the Grand River Baptist Association at this time as in May 1840 Elder Landon and four laymen were appointed delegates to the Association at Waterford. However in July 1840 they withdrew from the Association—no reason is given for their withdrawal. In January 1842 the church voted to restrict the communion to baptized believers and so came into harmony with the practice of the regular Baptist churches of the Province. In 1843 when the Canada Baptist Union was formed Rev. N. Bosworth, who was pastor of the Woodstock Church at this time became president of the Union. This Union was not lasting. The Regular Baptist Union of Canada which was formed at St. George in 1848 also failed. The communion question caused the greatest difficulty to co-operation. "In 1850 there was no Convention, no college, no paper, and the denomination seemed hopelessly divided." (J. H. Farmer). All societies had lapsed owing to dissention.

In October 1851 in an old Presbyterian chapel in the city of Hamilton the Regular Baptist Missionary Society of Upper Canada was organized. This society took in the churches of the Grand River North and Grand River South Associations. "Around it gathered in succession the Educational (1858), Superannuated Ministers (1864), Foreign Missionary (1866), Church Edifice (1867) and Publication (1882) Societies." (J. H. Farmer)

These Societies met in Annual Convention. The Directors of these Conventions include many members of Oxford Churches Archibald Burtch of Woodstock was vice president in 1860 and John Bower of Ingersoll was vice president in 1861

The Canadian Baptist Missionary Convention East, with the country east of Kingston for its field was organized on similar lines in 1858

In 1888 the Home Mission Conventions, East and West, the Foreign Mission Society Church Edifice Society and all other interests of the Convention, became merged in the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec.

The Free Communionists in the United States had joined with the Free Will churches in 1841 The Woodstock Church and the other churches in Oxford which had formed the Free Communion Association of Upper Canada did not join the Free Will Body with the rest of their denomination, though it was here and because of them that the movement started

In 1851 the Woodstock church applied for fellowship in the Grand River Association and a committee was appointed to inquire into their faith and practice. But it was not until 1857 that it joined the Association and the (new) Ontario and Quebec Convention

1819-1845

The minutes of the *Grand River Association* of 1844 (the twenty-fifth Anniversary) which have been preserved, report 28 churches with a total membership of 2001 Oxford churches reporting were:

(Organized)
1828—1st Blenheim (Riverside)—Rev Francis Pickle.
    2nd Blenheim—Rev Heman Fitch
1809—1st Oxford
1838—2nd Oxford (Harris Street)
1832—1st Norwich (Springford)
1837—2nd Norwich (Burgessville)
1826—Zorra (near Zorra Station)
1828—Nissouri (West Nissouri)

This meeting which convened at Beamsville in June decided to meet again in October with the Second Baptist Church in Oxford to consider the school The Montreal College was a contentious subject at this time It was also resolved to appoint one delegate from each church to investigate the expediency of dividing this Association.

1845-1856

Thirteen churches were set off from this body to go with certain churches set off from the Long Point Association, thus to form a new Association these churches to send delegates to meet with the Second Blenheim Church in June 1845 to organize a new Association This Association retained the name *Grand River Association*, these churches being in the Grand River Area.

There had also been some changes in the church organizations. 1st *Blenheim* and 1st and 2nd *Norwich* churches were reported in this new Associational grouping The Association met with the 2nd Blenheim church and yet eight years later we find a new organization given the name of *Second Baptist Church in Blenheim* and received into this Association the following year (1854) with a membership of 82 In October 1844 the Association had met with the *Second Baptist Church in Oxford* and yet in 1848 this same church requested admission into the Association It was received in 1849 and continued until 1857 *The First Oxford Church* remained active and sent their pastor Elder Wm Freeman and Harrison Forbes as delegates to the Hamilton Convention in October 1851 At *Zorra* the former church had become extinct and another organization was formed and received in 1843 with Elder Isaac Elliott as pastor and Benjamin and Winchell Vandecar as delegates The *Nissouri* organization also lapsed. The township of Nissouri being divided in 1851 West Nissouri became part of Middlesex County and the West Nissouri Church on reorganizing in 1858 was not in the Grand River Association.

On January 22nd 1842 the First Oxford church appointed Elder Mabee and Brothers Aldridge and Crage to assist in organizing the first church in *Dereham* This church joined the Grand River Association In 1849 it reported Jess S Woodward as clerk and James Bodwell Jr as a delegate. The membership was 48 In 1854 56 Elder Isaac Elliott was pastor and J W Waggoner, Mt. Elgin Post Office clerk.

Tillsonburg in Dereham township was organized in 1848 and joined this Association in 1854

On March 16th 1848 the 1st Church of West Oxford 'Resolved to consider the members of the church in East Oxford as a Branch and grant them the liberty to receive members At the Grand River Associational gathering in 1849 the *Oxford East* Church of 12 members was received, the delegates from the church being Elder Jas Howey, Deacon Samuel Mabee Brothers Israel Gibbs Daniel Smith and Chester Gibbs. In 1861 Rev W C Beardsall was pastor here

1856-1868

On Saturday June 14th 1856 at the 12th Annual Meeting of this Association held in the First Regular Baptist Church in Brantford, the motion dividing the Association into two was carried—twenty two churches forming the Grand River Association North and twenty five forming the Grand River Association South. These Associations were composed of strict communion Baptist churches

The Grand River North Association included 1st *Blenheim*, 2nd *Blenheim* (called Drumbo in 1859), *Zorra* (sometimes called East Zorra and sometimes South Zorra) no detailed reports after 1863, *Bright* reported in 1868, *Gobles Corners* reported in 1868 and *Tavistock* reported in 1869. This Association met in the 1st Blenheim church in 1857, in Drumbo in 1860 and again in 1864

The Grand River South Association included *Dereham*, 1st *Norwich*, 2nd *Norwich*, *Tillsonburg*, *West Oxford* (1st Oxford), *Woodstock* received in 1857, *Otterville* received in 1858 *Ingersoll* received in 1858, *Mt Elgin* received in 1862 *East Oxford* received in 1862, *Beachville* received in 1867 *East Zorra 16th Line* joined in 1868 *Salford* received in 1877 *Brownsville* received in 1880 *Oxford West* (Foldens) received in 1881, and *Norwich* received in 1884

The Oxford East organization received in 1849 is not the East Oxford church received in 1862 but seems to be an earlier organization of East Oxford Baptists which lapsed The membership was small. Its location is not mentioned The first West Oxford church moved to Ingersoll in 1854 and a new church was organized in West Oxford at Foldens in 1881.

Neither is the location of the Dereham church known. The only records we have of it are from organization in 1842 until 1856.

1869 1897

In 1868 a committee was appointed from both South and North Associations to consult on the propriety of dividing the two Associations into three.

The proposal did not find favor in the South.

The North Association in 1869 adopted as much of the report as related to the churches of this Association and divided into the Midland Counties Association and the Brant Association. The *Brant Association* took in all Oxford churches in the former Grand River North Association with the exception of Tavistock, which joined the Midland Counties Association and later the Guelph Association. The first meeting of the Brant Association was held with the Riverside church near Richwood in Blenheim, on Friday June 3rd 1870.

Fourteen churches reported including 1st *Blenheim* (Riverside), *Bright, Drumbo, Gobles Corners*. In 1871 the *East Zorra 16th Line* transferred to the Brant Association and also this year *Wolverton* was received. In 1890 the newly formed church at Plattsville was received.

At the thirty-first Annual Meeting of the Grand River Association (South) held at Ingersoll, the re-adjustment of Associational boundaries was considered and changes adopted, the new Associations to meet in June 1888. Prof. J. H. Farmer was moderator of this meeting and Rev. H. Woodward was secretary treasurer at this time. Prof. N. Wolverton was appointed Moderator of the new *Woodstock Association*, which met for the first time at Springford in 1888. The following is taken from a circular letter sent out by Prof. Wolverton, Prof. Farmer and Rev. H. Woodward:— "To the members of the churches of the Woodstock Association, Dear Brethren and Sisters:—Another year having passed away, it is again our privilege as a committee to address you. We are doubtless all forcibly reminded of the changes that each year brings with it, but to us as an Association this year has been full of very radical changes. We are a new Association: from being one of the oldest and largest we meet this year as one of the smallest and newest. Instead of numbering as heretofore over 4000 we shall now amount to little more than a third of that number. While in this there may be some disadvantages, there are certainly many advantages. Any society may become so large as to be unwieldy, old institutions may get into ruts out of which it is sometimes very difficult to remove them. A few come to the front as prominent workers, while the many so merge their individuality into the great body that they are scarcely seen and their influence is little felt. Our numbers being so much smaller we shall become more generally and thoroughly acquainted and shall thus realize more of the benefit of the Christian intercourse that results from these gatherings. Many churches can have the Woodstock Association meet with them which could not by any possibility have invited the old Association with its large number of delegates. We venture to hope and remind you that the great benefit to us will be, better opportunity for more effective work for Jesus Christ. Our Association is designed to be an efficient means for mutual helpfulness and for aggressive work."

This Association included all the Oxford Churches in the Grand River South Association and also Burford and Scotland churches in Brant County and Goshen and Windham Churches in Norfolk County. East Zorra 16th Line transferred from the Brant Association to the Woodstock Association.

1897-1955

At the Ninth Annual Meeting of the Woodstock Association held at Tillsonburg 1896 it was "Resolved that the delegates of the Woodstock Association assembled in Tillsonburg June 3rd having heard a statement from Brother Grant of Ingersoll regarding the recommendation of the Convention meeting in Montreal, re the alteration of Associational boundaries desire to express their sympathy with the same, and appoint a committee of five brethren to confer with a similar committee of the Brant and Norfolk Associations agreeing to abide by the recommendation of such committee if agreeable to the churches." The Brant Association also appointed a committee at their Annual gathering held at Paris

"Pursuant to agreement the delegates from the Brant Association met with those of the Woodstock Association in the Oxford Street church, Woodstock in 1897 A committee was appointed to consider the question of union and report to the meeting. They reported as follows I. That the Union of the Brant and the Woodstock Associations is desirable and that we do now so unite to form an Association. II That so far as it may be deemed necessary, District meetings be held with the smaller churches, two or more such meetings to be held during the year III That the name of the new Association be The Oxford and Brant Association" After discussion this was adopted and Rev W. L. Newton was elected the first Moderator

In 1930 a readjustment of Associations was discussed throughout the Convention Oxford-Brant Association was not in favor of the proposed plan of enlarging the Associations and no change was made here

List of Organizations

1808-present—First Oxford Regular Baptist in West Oxford Township
  Moved to Ingersoll about 1864 and changed the name to Thames Street Baptist Church Ingersoll, in 1867
1822-present—First Free Communion Baptist in the town of Oxford
  (Woodstock) joined Ontario-Quebec Convention 1857
1822—about 1845—Blenheim Free Communion
1824—about 1840—south Norwich Free Communion
1825—183 —Zorra Free Communion
1826—became extinct—reorganized 1849 — 1860 Zorra Regular Baptist
  (Zorra P O)
1828—reorganized 1858-present—West Nissouri Regular Baptist
  (now in Middlesex)
1828-1844—reorganized 1848-1857 Second Oxford Regular Baptist,
1829-1875—First Blenheim (Riverside near Richwood)
1830 1849—Zorra 16th Line Free Communion
1831 about 1844—Second Oxford Free Communion.
1832 present—First Norwich (Springford)
1837 present—Second Norwich (Burgessville)
About 1837 about 1850—Ingersoll, Independent Cause.
——1845—Second Blenheim—unknown location
184 to 1870—Richwood Free Will Baptist
1842 1856—Dereham Regular Baptist—unknown location
1849 1882—First Free Will of East Zorra
1849-185 —East Oxford Regular Baptist, location unknown
1850-1938—East Zorra 16th Line Regular Baptist.

About 1830—Salford Free Will—Reorganized 1877 as Regular to present.
1863-present—Tillsonburg Regular
1858 1868—Ingersoll Reg Baptist, Albert Street.
1853-present—Second Blenheim, now Drumbo Regular
1857-1871—a Branch church 1871-present—Wolverton Regular Baptist.
1858-1913—Second Free Will of East Zorra ((12th Line)
1858 present—Otterville Regular Baptist.
1859 1861—a branch church 1861-present—Mt. Elgin Regular Baptist.
1859-1862—a Branch church 1862-present—East Oxford Regular Baptist.
1860-187 —Embro Regular Baptist.
1861 present—Beachville Regular Baptist.
1862 1864—lapsed 1877 present—East Nissouri Regular
1862-a few years—Woodstock Free Will.
1863-a few years—Bright Regular Baptist.
1863-1868—a Branch church 1868-1925 — Gobles Corners also called Creditville Regular
1864-a few years—Swaburg Free Will
1866-1918—Tavistock Regular Baptist.
1870-present—South Zorra Free Will (13th Line)
1875-1885—Strathallan Regular Baptist.
1880-1926—Plattsville Regular Baptist.
1880-present—Brownsville.
1881 present—West Oxford (Foldens) Regular
1884-present—Norwich Regular
1890 present—Oxford Street, Woodstock
1925-present—Otterville Union of Regular Baptists.

It is surprising to note that of all the organizations started during the first fifty years of settlement in Oxford, only four continue to serve—West Oxford of 1808 now serving at Ingersoll, First Church Woodstock since 1822, Springford since 1832 and Burgessville since 1837 The village churches organized in more recent years are of course more abiding

SUNDAY SCHOOLS

There was a Regular Baptist Sabbath School Convention in connection with the Grand River South Association, composed of two delegates from each sabbath school in connection with the churches of the Association Annual meetings were held on the Thursday following the Associational meetings and at the same place A Constitution was drawn up in 1870.

In September 1885 an agitation was started for the organization of a Baptist Sunday School Society This subject was dealt with by the Home Missionary Convention in October who recommended that Sunday School work be made prominent in the annual discussions at each of the Associations. In April 1886 at a meeting of the Board of the Home Mission Society, a committee was appointed to look after the interests of our schools generally This committee sent out forms for statistics the first returns being received in 1886. This committee later acted under authority of both the Home and Foreign Mission Societies.

Brant Association on June 1st 1887 by motion pledged itself to support and sustain the work of the Sunday School Committee and appointed Pastor Fraser of Gobles as Sunday School secretary for the Association.

The Grand River South Sabbath School Convention which had been holding its meetings following the Associational gathering, in 1888 decided to hold its sessions on the afternoon and one address in the evening of the second day of the Associational meeting.

B Y P U

A Fraternal Union of all Young People's Societies in Baptist churches in Ontario and Quebec was organized May 4th and 5th 1892 This Union was formed "for the unification of Baptist Young People their increased spirituality, their stimulation in Christian service their edification in Scripture knowledge ,their instruction in Baptist history and doctrine and in church history generally and their enlistment in Missionary activity through existing denominational organizations."

Mr James Baird of Plattsville was on the Board of Managers for 1892-93.

The Board of Religious Education

At the Ontario and Quebec Convention in October 1934 the Sunday School work and Young People's work were united under one Board called "The Board of Religious Education of the Baptist Convention." This Board is composed of a Sunday School committee of fifteen members and a Young People's Committee of fifteen members these committees submitting all plans to the Board for its approval. The Board of Religious Education is responsible for the administration of all religious educational work in our Convention.

District Meetings

The Regular Baptist Ministerial Association of the County of Norfolk in session June 11th 1863 in the Regular Baptist church at Scotland wrote to "the Regular Baptist Association Grand River South" respectfully recommending to the serious consideration of this Association the propriety and necessity of holding quarterly meetings in this Association for the following purposes viz. 1st. To afford the ministers of the Association an opportunity of more frequent intercourse and consultation with each other for their mutual benefit and improvement and on such subjects of pastoral labours and duties as are constantly recurring amongst us. 2nd For consulting together on Associational work. 3rd That more frequent opportunity may thus be given for the discussion of denominational subjects; together with the rousing up the energies of declining churches, the encouraging the drooping spirits of ministers, the giving of timely counsels, so as to prevent the frequent difficulties in churches and betwixt churches, and otherwise cultivating a higher tone of Christian life in the denomination and a more general and mutual feeling for one another in all the various branches of Christian work."

These quarterly meetings were held regularly in the Grand River South Association from 1863 1877

The need for District meetings was mentioned when the Oxford-Brant Association was formed and provision made for two or more such meetings to be held yearly

These meetings were the forerunners of the present Pastors' and Members Conference which meets several times during the year

CHAPTER XII.

WOODSTOCK COLLEGE

The need for a good academy which would also prepare young men for the ministry led to much thought and discussion throughout the denomination. Montreal Theological College, after bravely struggling for years, had succumbed for want of support and sympathy. Other projects also fell through. But the idea of founding a college of some kind had never been long absent from the minds of the leading men in the denomination.

In 1856 the plan for a Literary and Theological School was submitted to the people. The other schools and plans had been for Theological training only. This new school plan included ladies as well as men, as two schools could not be built. Rev. R. A. Fyfe of the Bond Street Church, Toronto, was the leader in this plan. He held decided opinions as to the value of education under Christian influences and saw that, at that time, not one in fifty of the residents in the rural districts could obtain a high school training without leaving home.

Three places desired to have the school—Fonthill, Brantford, and Woodstock. All guaranteed financial help and the offers of Woodstock parties were considered most satisfactory and were accepted. The land for the school was given by Mr. Archibald Burtch and Woodstock friends guaranteed $10,000.00 including the value of the site towards the school, $8,000.00 of this was to be raised in Oxford County.

The first important meeting of subscribers was held at Woodstock in March 1857, when the subscribers formally organized as "The Canadian Literary Institute" and elected their first Board of trustees. Mr. Wm. Winter was elected chairman, Mr. John Hatch of Woodstock vice-chairman, Mr. James Kintrea of Woodstock treasurer, and Mr. E. V. Bodwell of Mt. Elgin secretary.

On the 23rd of June 1857 the corner stone was laid by Archibald Burtch. Rev. Dr. Ryerson, superintendent of Education for Ontario, was present and gave one of the addresses.

The workmen engaged in the building were billeted with Mr. and Mrs. Archibald Burtch.

Hard times came to the country during 1857-59, making the collection of pledges towards the building fund a difficult one. Deacon Archibald Burtch, who was for some time treasurer, mortgaged his own dwelling house in order to carry on the work. It was not until the 4th of July 1860 that the school was opened. Only one flat of dormitories was finished at that time. After a term of six weeks the school closed for the summer vacation and during the vacation Dr. Fyfe canvassed for the school and raised nearly enough to finish another flat of dormitories.

It is said of Dr. Fyfe that "he was a qualified leader and a man of action with a devotion to duty as he understood it that was absolute and unfaltering. He made our educational work the centre of our denominational life." He became the first Principal of the Institute.

The fall term opened with seventy nine students enrolled, which gave practical proof that such a school was needed and appreciated.

On the morning of the 8th of January 1861 the building was entirely destroyed by fire. This calamity elicited instant sympathy. The citizens of Woodstock at a public meeting decided to place the old Woodstock Hotel at the disposal of the Literary Institute trustees, rent free, and the work of the school was carried on here while the new buildings were being erected. The Hotel furniture was used for which they paid part of its value.

The Insurance Companies paid over the $8,000.00 insurance which had been placed on the Institute but the trustees were still a few thousand dollars in debt and knew not how they were to finance another building.

But before the end of the week in which the fire occurred the Hon William McMaster wrote to Dr Fyfe offering $4000.00 towards a new building, providing that the balance of the sum required could be raised. Response to the appeals that were made came in rapidly and pledges for over $21,000.00 were secured in a few months. The new edifice was completed by midsummer 1862.

The Oxford and Norfolk Gazeteer of 1867 records as follows, "The Canadian Literary Institute has a site on a rising ground commanding splendid natural views. It is a noble structure (reflecting great credit on its architect David White) of three wings or compartments, surmounted by a handsome Dome . . . with ample playgrounds. This educational establishment is rendered one of the best scholastic institutions in the Western part of the Province.

The Institute is under the control of the Regular Baptist denomination. It has three different departments viz. Primary Higher and Theological the average attendance on which consists of fully 100 students. The fees for attendance in Primary and Higher departments vary from $20.00 to $28.00 per year. In the Theological department attended by about thirty students the tuition is gratis."

Besides Dr Fyfe the teaching staff in 1860 was composed of Miss Brigham Miss P S Vining who taught for six years, Mr W Stewart, and Mr W B Hankinson who stayed until 1867.

For many years there was a constant increase in the number of students attending the Institute and this, with the rapid rise in the general educational status of the Province, made an enlargement of the staff of instruction a necessity. In 1868 the Rev. John Crawford was appointed to the Theological staff. In 1875 J C Yule a former student of the school and an honor graduate from Toronto University was added also to the Theological department. Prof. Yule only served for two terms before he died. Another son of the Institute Rev John Torrance was appointed to the vacant professorship. In 1868 Rev Wm Stewart retired and was succeeded by James E Wells as instructor in Classics and Logic. By 1878 the staff had been increased to sixteen.

In 1878 the Institute and the denomination suffered a great loss in the death of Dr Robert Alexander Fyfe. 'He was undoubtedly the greatest organizer and maker of men in Canadian Baptist history.' (J H Farmer.) Following his death, Prof Wells was appointed head of the Literary department and Rev John Torrance was put in charge of the Theological department. 'Next to Dr Fyfe probably Prof. Wells exerted the largest influence in shaping the policy of our educational work.'

The Institute also had a Lady Principal, the first Lady Principal be-

ing Mrs S. T. Cooke appointed in 1861 She was followed by Mrs. J E Wells and other women of recognized ability and scholarship A Ladies building was erected in 1873 When Moulton Ladies College was opened in Toronto in 1888 co-education was discontinued at Woodstock

In 1881 the Theological department was removed to Toronto and became the Toronto Baptist College on Bloor Street, Hon Wm. McMaster erecting a building for their accommodation at his own expense.

The Primary and High School Work continued at Woodstock under Rev Newton Wolverton In 1883 the name was changed to Woodstock College.

Toronto Baptist College and Woodstock College were united under one Board to be appointed by the denomination by a University Charter obtained from the Ontario Legislature at its session of 1887.

In 1888 at the Convention in Guelph, it was decided to establish a College thoroughly equipped for full University work, at Toronto. This was realized through a gift of nearly a million dollars by Senator McMaster and McMaster University was opened in 1890 This Christian University under the control of the Convention of Ontario and Quebec has been the training school for Baptist leaders, five hundred ministers and missionaries having been trained here for service, while many graduates are leaders in their home churches

Dr T H. Rand followed Rev John Torrance as Principal of Woodstock College and on his retirement Professor J H Farmer became Principal. Dr Farmer moving to McMaster University, W H Huston was appointed Principal and on his death in 1892 Joseph I. Bates became principal. Following Principal Bates were A L. McCrimmon, A. T MacNeill, Dr Thomas Wearing, and Ralph Willcock.

As the educational facilities in the Province became more numerous and young people could receive a good education without leaving home, the attendance at the College decreased. As this decrease became more marked the revenue received was not sufficient to carry on an efficient school and large deficits had to be cared for Efforts were made to increase the registration The Educational report of 1925 states that The school has had a fine history its traditions have been noble, its achievements notable. The staff is capable and loyal The equipment is excellent." And a plea was made for a larger number of boys from Baptist homes.

Following much careful consideration on the part of the Senate and Board, Woodstock College was closed as at August 31st 1926

The hope for a practical plan for re-opening and conducting the school did not materialize.

The buildings were rented for a couple of years and then sold

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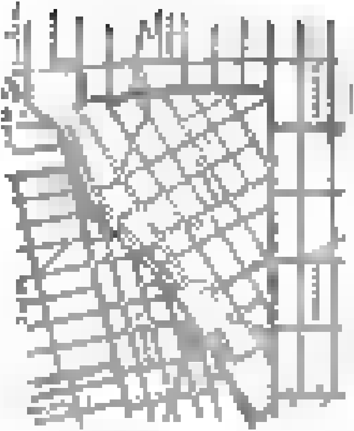

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